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New Internationalist exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless in both rich and poor nations; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between those nations if the basic material and spiritual needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for world development.

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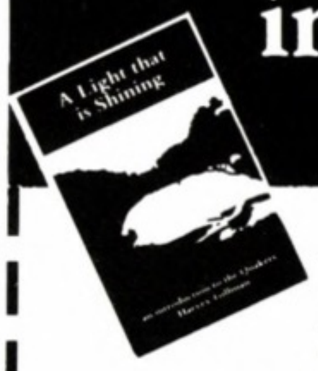

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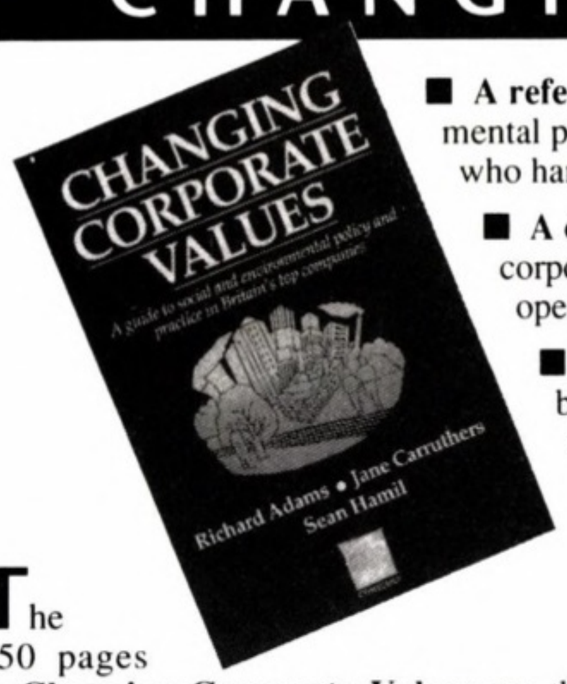

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FROM THIS MONTH'S EDITOR

ONCE a year in October, the **NI** staff lock themselves in a room for two days and talk about the magazine; its aims, your response to it and about what changes we could make.

We also discuss which themes we should cover in the next 12 months. The list begins with about 90 subjects – many of which will have been suggested by readers. The ensuing debates may be long and heated – but never dull. When finally the 15 or so of us do agree, the 12 subjects are assigned to particular editors and particular months.

This one – on the arms trade – was scheduled for January 1992. But when it looked as if the Allied forces really were going to war in the Gulf we decided to bring the issue forward.

This shift in priorities reflected what was happening in the wider world as the resort to armed force dominated our lives, seeping into our cultures. One sign was the proliferation of war magazines; a nearby newsagent still has an entire row of them – stacked under the porn.

But there is a flip side to the high profile that weapons have been getting. The highly secretive business of arms trading has been thrown into the lime-light.

Awkward questions have been asked, like 'How did we come to be selling arms to Saddam in the first place?'

Anti-arms-trade campaigners explain that it was done routinely, mainly legally and with ample help from our governments. Much of the equipment like electronic systems is not classified as arms anyway.

Arms companies are, of course, constantly selling their goods to leaders just as ruthless as Saddam Hussein. We just don't hear about how British Aerospace, for example, helps to maintain Indonesia's dictator President Suharto who has killed 200,000 East Timorese people.

Anti-arms trade campaigners – who for years have been trying to draw attention to such issues – now find the phone won't stop ringing. Many inquiries come from journalists like me – and I am particularly indebted to Ann Feltham and Janet Williamson at the **Campaign Against the Arms Trade** in London for all their help.

They dispelled many popular myths – like the one which maintains that Iraq was mainly supplied by the US and the UK. These countries did export equipment for military use until recently but the main suppliers were France and the USSR.

While putting together this issue I was confused about what exactly is going on in the arms world. The messages are so mixed. One day you hear that US Defence Chief Dick Cheney is promoting US military hardware in the Middle East; a few days later that President Bush is heading an arms control initiative in the same region.

I suspect that we are going to see many more politically motivated smokescreens. And that makes it doubly important that we know what is going on, and what we can do about it.

Vanessa Baird

Vanessa Baird
for the New Internationist Co-operative

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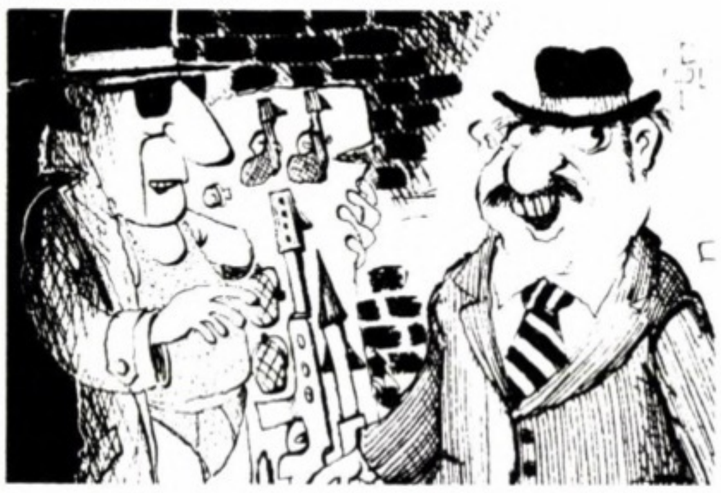

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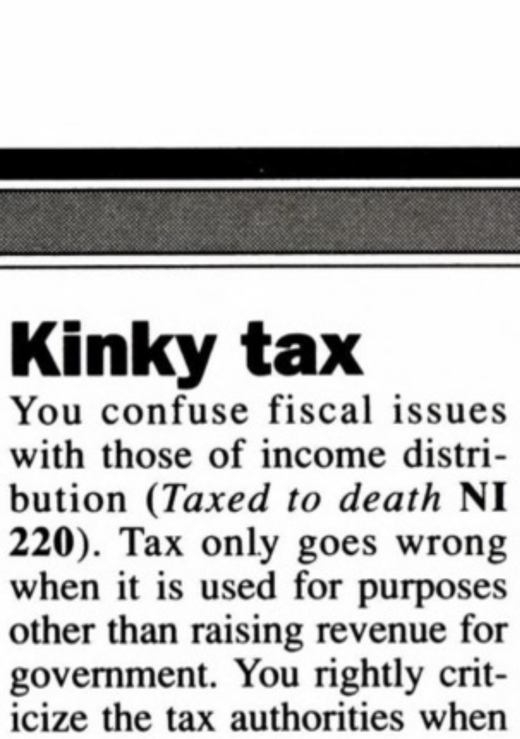
LETTERS

NI welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

Kinky tax

You confuse fiscal issues with those of income distribution (*Taxed to death* **NI 220**). Tax only goes wrong when it is used for purposes other than raising revenue for government. You rightly criticize the tax authorities when they allow companies tax



breaks in order to promote certain types of growth and investment. Yet you recommend a series of tax measures that would radically redistribute income. Worse, you go on to recommend the manipulation of taxes for such purposes as environmental protection.

These are not the purposes of tax. It is just as dishonest to hide this kind of policy in the tax system as it is to use tax for the other purposes you criticize. To thinly disguise it all as a detective story just compounds the dishonesty.

Anton Gratz
Calgary, Alberta
Canada

Double standards

Yes, Peter Hardy, Vietnam is beautiful and yes, smiles and friendly faces will be an abiding memory of my visit (*Letters* **NI 219**). But other memories include the ceaseless toil wherever we went – like the cleaner who cycled 40 miles a day to earn a pittance – the squalid living conditions with rats everywhere, and throngs of children trying to touch us because of the superstition that touching a Westerner means that one day they too will be able to leave Vietnam and come West.

Money and material goods do not bring happiness but neither does poverty. Hanoi is poorer than Saigon but there was no evidence that people were happier. Development will inevitably have undesirable consequences – environmental problems and materialism. But how can we deny the Vietnamese a standard of living that we ourselves are not prepared to give up?

Rosalind Fox
Pangbourne, UK

Highly strung

It may be hell without a hammock in the Amazon (**NI 219**) but you ignore the undeniable superiority of the hammock to the bed. Simple, cheap, beautiful, portable, durable, airy, hygenic, sociable, conducive to abstract thought and (for the expert) tender procreation, the hammock easily beats the bicycle as the best example of human creative genius. It could and should abolish the private tyranny of the bedroom and transform the shape of modern, urban civilization as we know it.

I will not take seriously the politics of anyone who disagrees with me.

Nevada Smith
Montevideo, Uruguay

Clutching straws

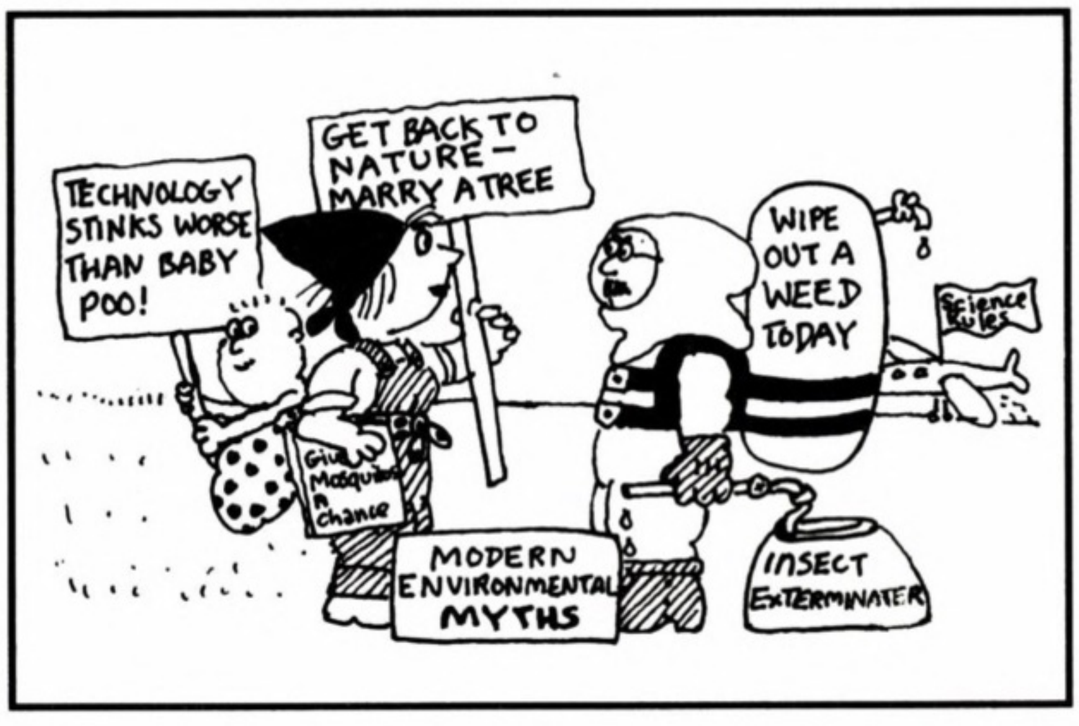
Marian Laring's 'despair' about Third World support for Saddam's invasion of Kuwait is unfounded (*Letters* **NI 219**). People of the Third World are very aware of Saddam's ilk – see Pinochet, Pol Pot, Amin et al. But Saddam inspired support because he appeared to challenge the Northern control of resources. In the words of the Conservative *Straits Times* (of Malaysia) he 'burst in upon the rich man's (sic) banquet'. The support that this inspired around the Third World reflects the opposition that exists to the North's exploitation of the South.

G Blackmore
Enfield, UK

Harsh words

Your *Letter from Tamil Nadu* (**NI 219**) was depressing. One does not expect to see apologies for nationalism in a magazine which calls itself 'internationalist'. Just because Mari Marcel's nationalism is grudging and reluctant does not make it any more acceptable. In fact it smacks of a rather nauseating hypocrisy which is absent from a more honest form of jingoism. Like all Indian nationalists Mari Marcel endorses myths about Pakistani aggressive intentions, assumes without question that Kashmir is an integral part of India, and supports massive increases in defence expenditure when millions of Indian people are close to starvation. With friends like this, who needs enemies?

Peter Somerville
Manchester, UK



Cartoon : Viv Quillin

Super stereoptypes

It is fitting that **NI** is printed in black and white since that is how subjects are presented. I am referring to the naive review of *Dances with wolves* (*Reviews* **NI 218**). It is just as foolish to assume that all Indians are noble and wise as it is to imagine that all US soldiers are obnoxious, cowardly rednecks. Many people think of Indians as lazy, violent, alcoholic bums. Others prefer to view them as oppressed martyrs. Indians are just people. In countering negative stereotypes with positive ones **NI** resorts to inverted racism. And if we are to overcome racism we must learn from the past – not re-write it.

Rick Johnston
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Comic offence

Your comic issue *Starve trek* (**NI 218**) saddened me by abusing the image of the Buddha. To millions of people this image is holy – myself included. And much as I would like to have read the magazine, the trivialization of the Buddha was too overpowering for me to concentrate on what you had to say about starvation. I do hope you did not intend to cause offence.

Rob Yellowhammer
Leamington Spa, UK

Nazi nightmare

Judy Gahagan raises several valid points (*The end of nature* **NI 217**) but I have reservations regarding her statement that 'the seeds of ideas past, present and future from all cultures lie dormant in all of us' and can be reawakened at will to reintegrate Nature into a new cosmology for the West.

While it is true that the process of rationalization has resulted in the disenchantment of the world, it is less evident that a new cosmology which reintegrates Nature can be easily constructed through the revival of past cultures and mythology. Once cultures and myths are disenchanted they are not easily reawakened. The Nazi effort to do so in the 1930s and 40s by creating an organic community, resulted in a nightmare.

While I agree with the principle of breaking away from the dry rationalism and uncontrolled materialism of modern society, we should not deceive ourselves about what is possible.

Gregory Ellis
Clayton, Victoria, Canada

Eating education

The great majority of our chronically ill have eaten themselves that way. In fact there are few progressive illnesses that cannot be reversed by dietary understanding and adjustment along with other life-style changes. The 'Protect yourself' Information Sheets that the Self-Health Association produces analyse worldwide researches that can be of practical use in the home. People who have changed their diet and found definite relief are invited to send a summary to The Secretary, Self-Health Association, 30 Dalmeny Road, Bournemouth, Dorset BH6 4BW. In this way others may be helped by self-help methods.

Dr TH Crouch
Mandelieu, France

Emphasis shift

Vietnam was not 'a lesson in the failure of old-style communism', as Chris Brazier suggests (**NI 216**). It was a lesson in the determination that Western-style 'free-enterprise' capitalism has that no other economic system should be given a chance to succeed. Valient efforts have been and still are being made by a caring government in Vietnam to look after those most in need; and this in a hostile, grasping world and after the unprecedented ruthlessness of US aggression.

Kathleen Jones
Bishop's Castle, UK

Cozy Colorado

With respect to the letter by Amina Sadler (*Letters* **NI 215**) on the virtues of women in Islam, may I be permitted to say first that I am sure Colorado Springs is a nice place for Muslim women. And second I am equally sure Amina would find it different in the back streets of Calcutta or in a farming village up the Nile Delta. I hope she realizes that she is lucky to have been able to make the choice to 'convert'. Had she been a Muslim wishing to convert she would have found things a little different – except of course maybe in Colorado Springs.

Roland Pitson
Hereford, UK

Dropping cans

Australia is experiencing a crisis in its farming industry and sheep farmers are being forced to destroy between 20 and 50 million sheep a year because of the lack of a market. With Africa entering a severe famine, this is sheer waste; the humanitarian thing would be to use the sheep to feed these people. During the 1960s in Laos while war raged, canned meat was dropped free to both the military and the huge refugee population – so it can be done.

John Haren
Adelaide, Australia

Studying life

My geography class is concerned that the Antarctic Treaty – which exists to protect the environment, maintain peace and ensure that resources are used with care in the region – is to end this year. Our class feels that no hazardous wastes should be deposited on the continent and that there should be no territorial claims made on it.

Adie Moinaei, year 10 student
Toogoolawawah, Queensland, Australia

The views expressed on the letters pages are not necessarily those of the NI.

LETTER FROM TAMIL NADU

In silence and shame

Why the written word? Mari Marcel Thekaekara answers an old man's query.

NESTLING amid the forests and rippling streams of the Nilgiri mountains of Tamil Nadu, South India, are little settlements of tribespeople. They are the Todas, the Kotas, the Irulas, the Paniyas, the Moolakurumbas, the Kattunaickens and the Bettakurumbas. They have lived here since time immemorial. Today they are termed *adivasis* by the Government, meaning the first settlers or original inhabitants.

The philosophy of these people has remained unchanged for centuries and is similar to those sentiments expressed by Chief Seattle when he asked the President of the United States in 1855: 'How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land, the freshness of the air or the sparkle of the water?'

The tribals passed this reverence for nature down from generation to generation, from grandparent to grandchild – until various 'civilized' people entered the tribal stronghold: ruling British rajas, the Indian Government and marauding pioneers came to stay. Homelands were bought and sold over tribal peoples' heads: no-one even thought it necessary to consult them. And so they lost their land while they lived on it, just like the Red Indians in the US, the Aboriginal people of Australia and other indigenous people around the world.

On the tribal project where I work with my husband Stan, we decided to encourage the younger tribal leaders to start asking 'Why?' 'Why are we poor people, malnourished, ill? Why have we lost our lands, our forests, our pride, our culture? Why?'

We came across hundreds of cases where people had signed away their land having been misled into thinking that the paper they were signing would give them ration cards, government pensions or title deeds. Very few had documents to show possession of their lands. Their logic was simple: 'It is my land. Why do I need a piece of paper to prove it? Is my word not enough?'

Slowly we realized that the tribals were totally disinterested in learning to read.

At the time the Government and various voluntary agencies were trying to popularise a literacy drive. And we ourselves were forming work co-operatives or *sangams* in all the villages.

One day we held a meeting at our office to teach a group of Bettakurumba tribals how to keep the *sangam* accounts and write their books. Stan set up blackboard, chalk and duster. But when the group of fifty had finally settled down, he realized with a shock that only two people were literate. Hastily he put away chalk and papers and began a general discussion on the state of things in the tribal villages and tribal society.

This group of tribals lived deep in the forest and their simple way of life had remained intact for centuries, uncorrupted by outside values and standards. Gradually the discussion veered towards money and accountability. Stan tried to explain gently that many *sangams* had been utterly ruined because of unscrupulous leaders misappropriating official funds. This had led to chaos and the destruction of the villages concerned. The hard work of months could be destroyed by one crooked leader if the people were not vigilant. Thus he argued the case for literacy.

Mathan, an old Bettakurumba man, turned. His skin was parchment-like and weatherbeaten. He looked Stan full in the face and spoke deliberately and gently, as to a little child:

'The chief is my leader. My tribe and I have appointed him our headman. Could he have achieved this position in our society if he were dishonourable? Are we fools to elect a thief as head of our people? And is he an imbecile to throw away the honour, prestige and dignity of his Chieftainship, the respect of his people, the veneration of the young ones, for a hundred rupees?

'You attach so much to written figures. Do people lack honour in your world that the spoken word has so little importance? Why so much value, so much worship for the same words merely because they are transferred to a slip of paper?'

We could not answer him. In silence and in shame I wondered how I could convey his wisdom to our literate millions.

Mari Marcel Thekaekara has been working for the last seven years on a project she and her husband started for native people in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

Armed to the teeth. Bombing to bits. The armed agenda was invigorated by the Gulf war. But it may not be as strong as it seems. Vanessa Baird explains why.

BANG BANG YOU'RE DEAD

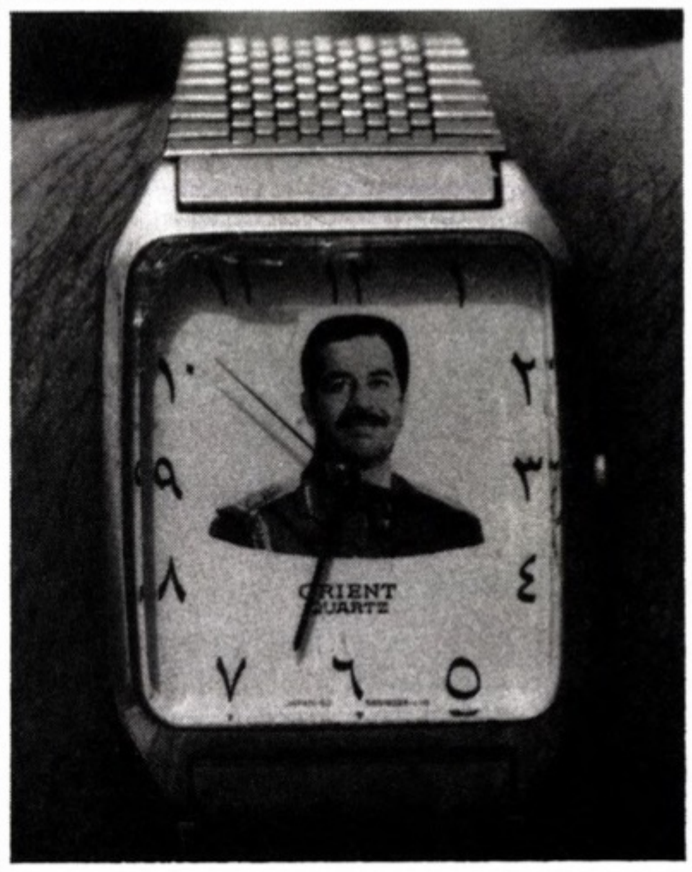


Photo : Steve McCurry/Magnum

'GET a Patriot!'

'Nah. Boring ... I want a Tornado!'

'Get an F-15. Oh look. You can get a Tornado and an F-117 together,' said the small, fresh-faced boy with that particular relish for names that are numbers.

His friend touched the colourful package – the words 'Desert Storm' emblazoned across it – counted up his money and went up to a smiling shopkeeper behind the toy counter.

'I expect you have sold quite a few of those,' I observed.

'As a matter of fact, they are new in yesterday,' said the shopkeeper. 'That's Airfix for you. The war didn't go on long enough for them.'

The war didn't go on long enough. It was a comment I heard repeated at another venue a few days later. The pictures of military hardware were similar. So were the boys – though these were of the larger, pin-striped variety.

It was an international arms bazaar – or more correctly the Defence Components and Equipment Exhibition, sponsored by the Defence Manufacturers' Association of Great Britain and held at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, UK.

The show was the first of its kind in the West since the Gulf war ended. It was well attended by the press – not least thanks to a rumour that Chilean ex-ruler General Pinochet might be paying a visit.

The officials had not been encouraging. 'I don't think you will find it very interesting,' one said, immediately arousing my interest. 'There won't be any tanks or planes or anything like that. It's just components.'

Just components

He was right. There were lots of pipes and mouldings and castings and bits of electronics the purpose of which seemed unspecific, obscure or euphemistic. Royal Ordnance suppliers were there promoting things called 'penetrators' and 'actuators'. You might be forgiven for thinking you had stumbled into a 'marital aids' fair by mistake. The actuators offered 'instant responses, a single shot causes piston to be thrust outwards'. We were also assured that there was 'no leaking after fire'.

Meanwhile, GEC Aerospace offered 'intelligent power control and generation systems' and 'remote thermal control'. Those words – 'intelligent', 'remote', 'control' and 'power' – cropped up time and again on the many stands. Words that did not appear at all were 'kill', 'maim', 'destroy', 'impoverish', 'terrorize'.

The images in the exhibition were clean, shining, precise. They bore, of course, no relationship to the carnage on the Basra highway, or the heart-rending scenes of people trying to identify the remains of their children in the aftermath of the Baghdad shelter bombing.

That the goods on display were 'just components' served as a powerful symbol of how the military-industrial complex works. It's how the culture of militarism works too. By splitting up functions we can become detached from the consequences of our actions.

Yet we are all involved in this deadly agenda. We are all – in a sense – components. The defence procurer from India who discusses a thermal imaging system with a sales rep from Bofors or Lockheed is a willing component. His impoverished compatriot back home picking tea on a Punjabi plantation has no choice in the matter. With the bags of tea she fills for export she is helping to earn the cash that will be spent on buying the Hawk or Mirage or Mig fighter plane that screeches across the sky above her.

She might prefer that the money were

Photo : Gideon Mendel/Magnum

Bad news for arms-makers is good news for babies: no market for missiles will make more opportunities for balloon-gazing in comfort.

spent on building a school for her children. She might ask why it still takes her four hours a day to fetch clean water – but only four minutes for a missile from the other side of the country to reach her region. And she might like to know why, during the past five years, her government imported more arms than any other country in the world – but could not afford to build a health clinic in her village.

The answers given would hinge on concepts like 'national security', on the need to defend against an enemy – in this case Pakistan. She would not be told – although she might guess – that this perceived threat serves the men in power very well indeed. It sets an agenda which maintains their privilege while holding down those with cause to challenge authority – the poor, the hungry, the oppressed, the women. All done, of course in the 'national interest'.

It was a good war for men in power. The high-speed antics of Allied fighter pilots got the news coverage. The thousands suffering from disease and other after-effects of the bombing did not. Nor did the 20 million people in Africa slowly starving to death.

A good war?

'It will make the arms-traders happy,' was the oft-repeated cynical aside during this time. The companies were able to show off their wares prime-time and for free nearly every evening for 40 days. The news networks even used manufacturer's film footage – just as the manufacturers now use Gulf war news footage in their fairs.

The good news is that the arms-makers are not happy at all. 'The Gulf war was a blip,' said the man from GEC Aerospace, echoing the comments of many. 'It boosted confidence for a while. But it did not go on long enough. Not enough equipment was lost.'

The big problem for the arms-makers is that the Cold War – and the crazy arms spending party of 1970s and 1980s – is over. Most countries in the industrialized world are slashing their defence budgets, with the effect that the global arms trade shrunk by 35 per cent in 1990.

Some makers of arms are even saying that the Gulf war was 'a bad thing' for them. It cost too much – mounting Desert Shield alone cost $53 billion[1] – and defence ministries cut orders to pay the bill. Even Japan – a keen arms buyer – dipped into its military kitty to pay for its contribution to the war effort.

But the unhappiness of the arms-makers is not cause for unqualified joy. It has sparked off two negative reflexes. Thousands of defence workers have been sacked across Europe, the US and USSR in the past few weeks. This has been particularly galling for trade unions who for years have been trying to get sluggish management to think about diversification and conversion.

Far more dangerous, however, is the second reflex: a frantic drive to export arms, especially to the Third World. This is being encouraged by governments in the major arms-producing countries – the US, USSR, UK and France. They don't want massive unemployment as their defence-dominated economies crumble.

This is likely to create havoc in the Third World. Arms traders thrive on instability – and rich pickings are most obviously to be made in the Middle East. It is likely that the current spate of arms sales to Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia will create another Gulf war scenario in the next few years – though the main players may swap roles.

Other potential trouble spots are being eagerly viewed by the major arms companies such as McDonnell Douglas (US), British Aerospace (UK), Thomson (France). Seen as promising are Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan. The reason is that East-West detente has caused neighbours to regard each other more nervously as old regional rivalries and conflicts re-emerge. Fear of China in particular is causing tension in Pacific Rim nations.

The arms trade does not actually cause conflicts, of course. Conflicts happen anyway – for a whole range of reasons. And providing they are not resolved through violence they can be dynamic and productive. But the arms trade makes conflicts more bloody and prolonged. For example, it's estimated that the eight-year long Iran-Iraq war would have been over in a fortnight had the arms-makers of France, Britain, USSR and the US not supplied the two sides during the fray.

Swords and ploughshares

But governments go on building up their arsenals in the belief that they are buying greater security – and greater power. It's a tragic and expensive myth, as both the US adventure in Vietnam and Soviet engagement in Afghanistan demonstrated. The Superpowers were armed to the teeth – but without political support they failed.

In private, the defence fraternity knows that arms don't make sense. 'Arms are counterproductive, even militarily,' says Peter Drucker, advisor on procurement and personnel for nine years to the Secretary of Defence in the Kennedy administration. This opinion was shared by his senior military, business and academic colleagues.

The recent Gulf war appears to contra-

dict this: the weapons worked and the side with the fanciest gadgets won. But military analysts know that the Gulf war proved little about technology. Saddam Hussein never used Iraq's most sophisticated and expensive weaponry – including the 100 fighter aircraft stashed in Iran. Those Iraqi soldiers sent to the front were fodder for the grotesque Allied 'turkey shoot' that was to follow.

British military analyst Major General Ralph Crossley comments: 'The Iraqis on the ground were blind. We could see everything they did. They could see nothing we did. It is very easy for planners and procurers to draw the wrong lessons ...'

More important is to draw the right lessons from the ending of the Cold War – to stop making arms and start making things that are socially useful.

It won't be easy. Most defence companies haven't a clue how to compete in a civilian market, so accustomed are they to getting the feather-bedded, assured contract treatment from their defence ministries.

The military establishment is tremendously resistant to change. The snobbishness associated with producing prestige weapons of destruction goes hand in hand with a prejudice against making more practical household items. One defence journalist calls it the 'you-won't-catch-us-making-electric-kettles syndrome'.

Even when they do try there can be snags. Take the Soviet tank-makers who were asked to make something for the consumer market. They produced a washing machine with no fewer than 37 programmes, far too complex for anyone to want to use and far too expensive to buy. Such baroque excesses are more indicative of the mental blocks, than physical obstacles to conversion.

If those mental blocks are not removed, arms-making countries will dig themselves deeper into a financial crisis with no room for manoeuvre. Arms companies make much of the cost of conversion and the jobs that will be lost. If they took the long term view however they would see that more jobs will be created. Defence is notoriously capital intensive –

Cartoon : Austin

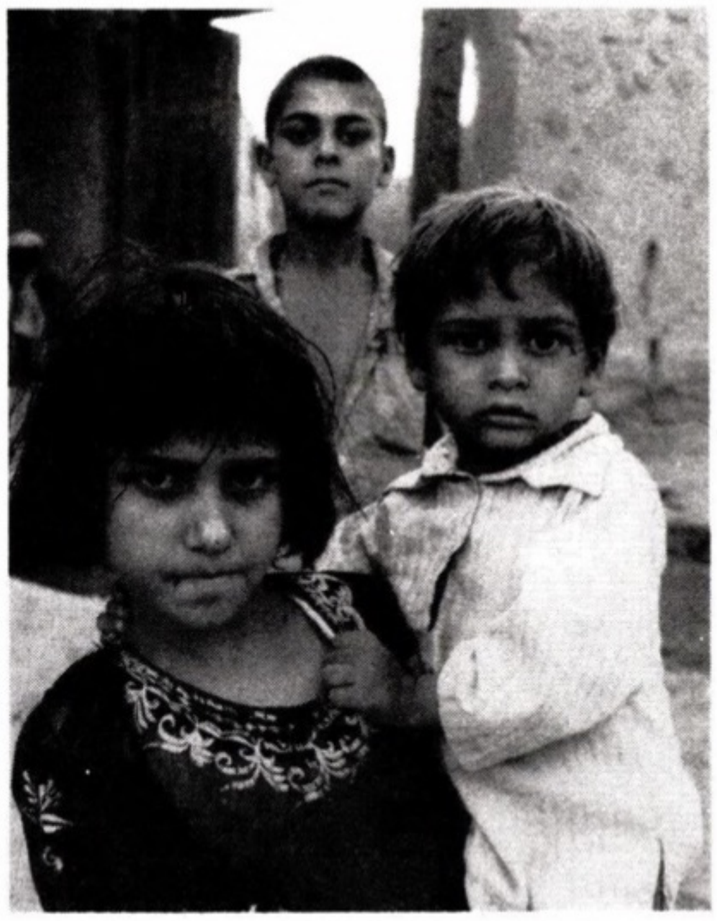


Photo : Steve McCurry/Magnum

Displaced Afghan children pay the price for the military priorites of others.

and not particularly labour intensive. Research in the US has shown that for every one billion dollars cut in US military spending 24,000 jobs are lost – but 31,000 can be generated for every one billion dollars of civilian investment.[2]

For developing countries the contrast is even greater. In India, for example, it costs $13,500 to create one job in the arms industry, $3,800 in civilian industry, $90 in road construction, $80 in agriculture and $9 in trade and commerce.[3]

But how, in practical terms, can we turn swords into ploughshares?

International housework

There are many ideas. One of the most exciting is redirecting military money towards environmental security. This is not as far-fetched as it may at first seem. Environmental protection technology is tipped to be a serious growth industry in the coming two decades. And former arms contractors might be the best equipped to take the lead – and do a bit of global housework for a change.

A good place to start would be the thousands of contaminated military bases and plants – relics of the Cold War – stretching across the world from the Pacific islands to the South Atlantic. In the US alone there are 14,000 of them, 1,000 of which are highly toxic. Germany has a further 300. And there is also a massive munitions stockpile in Europe – 350,000 tons of it in Germany – much of which is in a dangerous condition and of unknown chemical composition.

'Nobody really knows what went on at those sites,' says John Reed, editor of *Defence Industry Digest*. 'But military technology such as quick response control systems, data analyses, sensors, fibre optic technology could perhaps deal with this dangerous material.'

If the North invested in developing this environmental technology it could export this – not weapons systems – to the South. But any North-South trade must be based on equality not robbery. That means Third World producers must get a decent price for their commodities. This would give them disposable income which would stimulate global trade.

We are at a point in history when the industrialized world could – with the political will – do much to eliminate world poverty simply by redirecting South some of the money it is saving on defence cuts.

If the North makes the defence cuts it has announced during 1990s this will produce a peace dividend of two trillion dollars. Just one per cent of this – $20 billion – a year could provide the entire Third World with primary education, basic health care and safe water. By the end of the century poverty and hunger could be eliminated, says Dr Mahbub ul-Haq of the United Nations Development Programme.[4]

It would be good to see the UN take a more responsible role; it is after all the only body that could control arms in an international and integrated way. The gentleman's club of arms dealing countries which calls itself the Security Council, will have to be democratized and restructured, of course.

And there are other hopeful signs. This autumn the UN Secretary General will propose the creation of an international export register to remove the cloak of secrecy under which the international arms trade is currently allowed to operate. Banning arms sales to countries with poor human rights records – such as Indonesia – and countries where war is currently raging could be a next step.

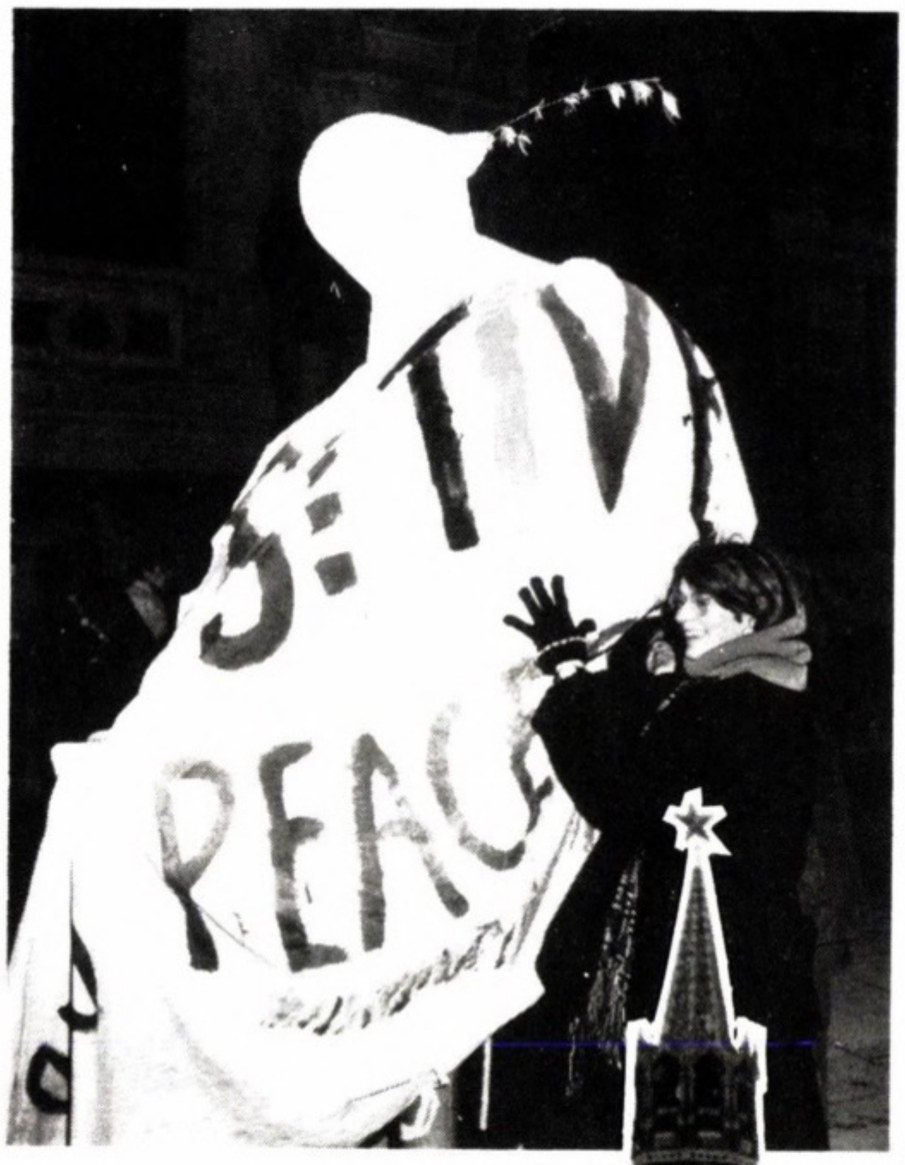
The moral arguments have always been on the side of the disarmers. Now market forces have joined them. But militarism is more than an economic or technological phenomenon. It is a political pattern – which serves the interests of a minority at the expense of the vast majority, but in which we are all involved.

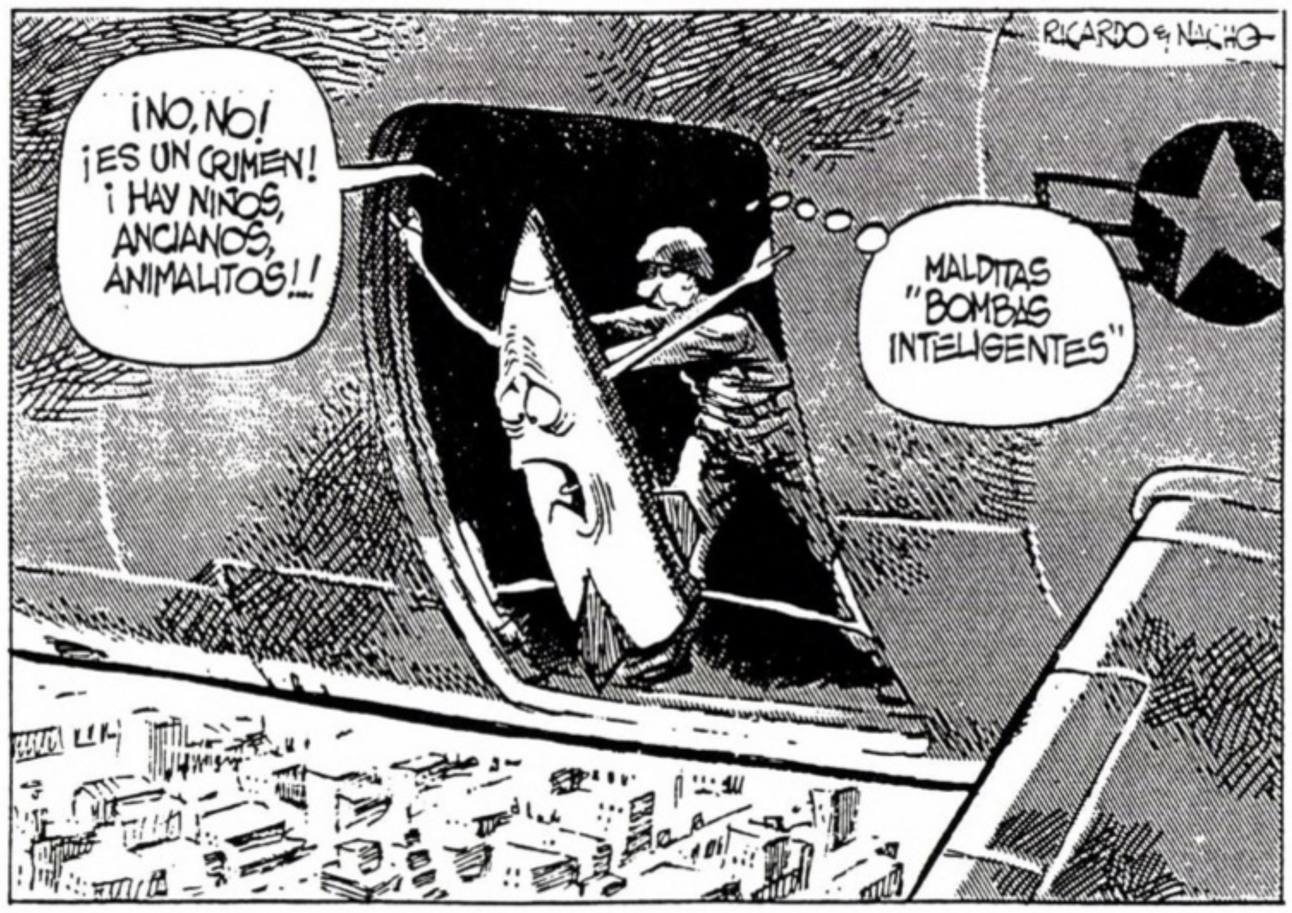
As she was being dragged out of the hall at the Birmingham arms fair a peace protester screamed: 'Every component counts. It is all part of the whole.' This was met with shrugs of amused indifference from the men on the stands.

And this may be the hardest struggle – against those who would depersonalize the issue, who have the 'just components' view, who refuse to make moral connections and ridicule notions of integrity.

Not only does the international arms trade try to divide us and detach us and depersonalize us. So do the very weapons that are its end product. Those components may help blow people to pieces; it may be you, or me or someone we love. And it makes the international trade in arms deeply and irrefutably personal. □

1 *SIPRI Yearbook, 1991*, Stockholm Institute of Peace Studies. **2** *South Magazine*, London, March 1991. **3** *The Baroque Arsenal*, Mary Kaldor, (Verso, 1983). **4** *Human Development Report 1991*, United Nations Development Programme.





HUMOUR is the most uplifting form of protest. It may range from cocking a snook at staturesque military postures in public places. Or presenting a burly and belligerent military man on the square with a bunch of flowers. Or of course drawing cartoons – such as the one above which appeared in a Spanish paper. 'No! No!', says the bomb.'It's a crime! There are children, old folk, animals'. To which the airman responds: 'Bloody smart missiles!' Not everyone sees the humour though: the police were not amused by the vast polystyrene peace dove that made its appearance at a recent demo – they arrested it.

Photos clockwise from bottom right : Brenda Prince/Format; Stepahanie Hendry/Format; Pam Isherwood/Format.

Photo : Donald McCullin/Magnum

Hungry for guns

African peasants die and crop failure gets the blame. But, George Ayittey says, we should be pointing the finger elsewhere. He explores a cause that leaders in the rich world – and in Africa – conceal.

AMNA was grinding millet when it happened. She was six months pregnant. The other women had just come back from their day's work in the sorghum fields and were chattering and laughing. Their laughter faded as they heard the distinctive rumble of army tanks. Within minutes army troops swooped into the town, rounded up a large group of about 400 people – women, men, children – and, accusing them of collaborating with 'the enemy', the soldiers drove two tanks over the people, machine-gunning those who tried to escape.

Amna survived because she fell under the trunk of a large tree. Feigning death, she lay until nightfall among the carnage of her fellow townspeople. Five small children, covered by their parents, also survived and wandered screaming among the bodies. Amna heard soldiers arguing whether to kill the children. Finally they agreed not to waste bullets: the children would soon die of thirst anyway.

Around 80,000 people fled the town of She-eb in north-eastern Eritrea that day as the army looted and burned the shops. Soldiers also slaughtered 10,000 sheep, goats, cattle and camels, putting carcasses down the town's only well, thus polluting it for ever.

The brutalities were committed by former dictator Colonel Mengistu's Ethiopian army, which was waging civil war against the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. Such events were common in Ethiopia – but by no means limited to that country. Military atrocities are rife in many African nations – like Sudan, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Somalia and Zaire, to name but a few. Civil wars and 'final offensive' campaigns give military regimes excuses to perpetrate atrocities against innocent peasants which are reminiscent of Africa's colonial past.

Naive Westerners think true freedom came to Africa after independence from colonial rule. To them a black man governing a black African nation is enough to mean the country has been liberated. They do not distinguish between peasants – the real people of Africa – and their crocodile rulers. Burdened by collective guilt over the iniquities of colonialism, these Westerners shy away from condemning atrocities meted out by 'educated' African heads of state against their own people: the slaughter of African peasants. But let a mere 100 African giraffes be killed and the whole Western world would erupt in deafening outrage.

More infuriating still are the African intellectuals who vehemently defend military rule as uniquely African, based upon African warrior tradition. This is nonsense.

Many ethnic groups did not have standing armies. In the face of imminent external threat the chief would summon young men of a certain age and present them to the king for war. After a war the army was disbanded so that the military did not drain the economy. In the Yoruba kingdom the *kankafo* – or military head of the war chiefs – was under strict orders never to enter the capital city and thereby stage a coup.

Only in a few African empires and kingdoms such as Dahomey and Zulu did the military play an active role in government. But three or four examples out of over 2,000 chiefdoms, kingdoms and empires in Africa's history hardly constitute 'a traditional pattern'. Even then, the Dahomean and Zulu military did not turn their guns against their own people. Those pre-colonial soldiers knew their function. Shamefully, modern soldiers in Africa are not so educated in this matter.

Spending spree

The modern military is a colonial institution introduced by Europeans into Africa primarily to suppress African liberation struggles. Military rule is as alien and un-African as colonial rule itself – and the military has become the scourge of Africa and the bane of its development. While public services disintegrate, African dictators squander scarce resources on the military.

The proportion of African funds going

to equip and pay for armies has been steadily rising – over 40 per cent in Ethiopia, 25 per cent in Mauritania and 20 per cent in Mali. Uganda spends over half of its annual budget on defence. Some of the poorest countries spend more on their military than on health and education.

This pattern is repeated elsewhere in the developing world – with arms spending rocketing from only $1 billion in 1960 to nearly $35 billion in 1987. Three-quarters of the global arms trade involves exports to developing countries.

Who is cashing in on this? The industrialized nations, of course. During the 1980s, NATO countries supplied 31 per cent of Third World arms, France 11 per cent and the Warsaw Pact countries 58 per cent. Instead of stability these purchases have brought chaos and carnage to the very peasants whose sweat and toil earn Africa the foreign exchange to buy these weapons.

Last year in Sudan, for example, the ruling Moslem North deliberately blocked supplies to the hungry South and even bombed relief sites. Then, unbelievably, the Bashir regime exported 300,000 tons of sorghum – a staple food – to Libya and Iraq in order to buy more arms to use against rebels in the south.

Peasant anger

As wars rage, food production per head has fallen consistently in Africa over the past 30 years, and Africa's exports have steadily declined, reducing the continent's share of world trade by more than half what it was in 1960.

In the words of Ghanaian peasant Amoafo Yaw:

'The weapons used to butcher the people all come from the farmers' cocoa and coffee money. This has been going on since the days of the colonial masters... and our own governments have continued the system... But the farmers have unconsciously decided they will no longer increase cocoa and coffee production and other items which the State depends on for foreign exchange.'

But the military fufu-heads can always find the resources to purchase weapons and rain bullets on the people. Even the World Bank, not renowned for its humanitarian policies, is beginning to express concern at the level of military spending by African governments.

And *West Africa* magazine, which historically avoided criticizing African governments, has also begun to complain: '...one million dollars could provide 1,000 classrooms for 30,000 children, and yet it is the cost of a modern tank,' it points out. 'The price of a single helicopter is equivalent to the salary of 12,000 schoolteachers. The policy choice of more tanks means fewer classrooms, with inevitable consequences for economic growth and social development...'

Even some military officers are speaking out and making the links between their countries' economic crisis and soaring military expenditure. For example former Nigerian Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, recently came out with this statement:

'The military intervention in politics in 1966 started a chain of reaction whose deleterious effects are still relevant in our national life today....The military should not get itself involved in politics. The sooner they leave the stage the better, or else the people may rise up against them.'

Collaboration

Various appeals have been made to industrialized nations to staunch the flow of arms to Africa. If Western governments and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would stop giving loans to dictators in the Third World, they would not be able to terrorize their nations – let alone extend their actions into the international arena.

But do Western governments and the IMF listen? For years they have propped up African regimes that savagely repress their own people – as in countries like Liberia, Kenya and Somalia.

In the words of one Kenyan: 'I see the aid that the US is giving President Daniel arap Moi as a weapon to fight the people of Kenya'. Aid, he went on to say, should be tied to human rights and should be given on condition that the country at least observe its own constitution.

When the World Bank and the IMF insisted on making a $70 million loan to the brutal Barré dictatorship in Somalia during 1989, Somali exiles in Washington were outraged. They staged demonstrations outside the grey offices of the IMF and the World Bank.

'It is immoral madness!' exclaimed one furious demonstrator. 'How can we be expected to pay back the money and interest on what will at once be side-tracked to subsidize the murder of our mothers and fathers, our brothers and sisters?'

Fooled

It has now become abundantly clear that appeals, exhortations and preaching aren't going to end the slaughter in Africa. Nor are destructive civil wars like those in Ethiopia or Liberia or Sudan.

The West is being fooled – and is colluding in the deceit. It knows of the billions kept in Swiss banks by the kleptocrats. 'Every franc we send impoverished Africa comes back to France or is smuggled into Switzerland and even Japan,' wrote the Paris daily *Le Monde* in March 1990.

So what can be done? There is, I believe, only one solution. Support for military regimes has to be removed – both inside and outside the country. A military regime does not depend only upon loyal armed forces but also upon the co-operation of civil servants and intellectuals. By going on strike civil servants may withdraw that support and bring down the regime. It happened twice in Ghana – in 1978 and 1979 – and in Benin in 1989.

But removing support from within the country is not enough, as long as rich foreign arms-selling and aid-donating nations continue giving support from outside.

Perhaps a lesson can be drawn from the experience of Bangladesh, where main opposition parties warned donor countries and agencies that any money loaned during the rule of President Hossain Mohammad Ershad would not be paid back.

The money had been hoarded by Ershad and his cronies, but the people, warned Begum Khaleda Zia, would 'not bear the pressure of paying back the debt'. Aid donors responded by withholding funds and two weeks later the military government of President Ershad collapsed.

So it can be done. The question is when will the industrialized world stop propping up dictators, selling them arms and feeding the militarism that is costing the lives of millions of African peasants? □

Ghanaian George Ayittey is visiting professor of economics at The American University, Washington DC.

Photo : Maggie Murray/Format

Food for eating not buying bombs.

MERCHANTS OF DEATH

There are lots of different types of arms dealers. But their activities - both legal and illegal - are often interconnected.

SALES REP – Robert works for a leading British arms corporation. An ex-air force pilot, he now keeps his beady eye trained on global trouble spots that will provide rich markets for his company's wares. When dealing with a customer he will indicate whether his product has been 'blooded' – or 'combat-proven'. The recent Gulf war has helped in this respect. Robert's five-star, jet-setting lifestyle suits him well. But his salary does not soar to the dizzy heights of freelance dealers. He could earn a lot more if, like some of his colleagues, he developed 'private interests'— such as covertly arranging sales to countries against which there are government sanctions; or secretly representing the goods of a rival firm as well as his own.

FIXER – Ahmad calls himself an 'intermediary'. He grew up in Beirut, a city that has become the nursery for arms dealers. He now lives in London and has an office in smart Mayfair. But his field of operation is the lucrative markets of the Middle East. There he fixes deals for Western arms companies like the one Robert works for. Ahmad takes a percentage cut on the deal. For this reason he likes to go for big orders of sophisticated equipment. He is discreet in business. But in his personal life he is a lavish spender – for which his friends nickname him 'Kashoggi'. The companies and sheiks and princes he mediates for may treat him with some disdain – but they need him.

SKIMMER – Hassan does not have to do anything to earn his pay-off – he just skims the cream off deals others make. He can do this because he is well connected, has a key position in his country's defence ministry, and can stop a deal going through by simply refusing to rubber stamp it. Before giving his approval he gets his informers to find out how much the intermediary – Ahmad for example – is making on a particular deal and determines his own cut accordingly. It makes little difference to Hassan which competing company gets the deal – he will get a handsome kickback whatever happens.

RUNNER – Jimmy gets weapons in and out of countries. His speciality is sanctions busting. But he rarely has to resort to anything so crude as smuggling. Loopholes in the law combined with corruption in high places serve him quite adequately. For example, an 'end-user' certificate has not been issued by the purchasing state to ensure that weapons will not be sold to states subject to arms bans. But Jimmy knows embassies which are prepared to sell a false 'end-user' certificate. Before the arms reach their official destinations they will be diverted to the real buyers. These could be countries such as Iraq or South Africa, guerilla or terrorist organizations or – increasingly common these days – drug barons in countries like Colombia.

DEALER – Hossain sells arms in the Ara Adam Khel arms bazaar near Peshawar, Pakistan. It is a family business, operating from a small shop, which he runs with his two brothers. Mainly he sells secondhand rifles – AK47s, known as the 'guerillas best friend'.Hossain has little difficulty finding weapons to buy. They find him. Most are brought in by Afghan rebels in exile who received the guns as a military aid from the West. But some officers from the Pakistan army are prepared to sell equipment too. It means having to keep well in with different people – doubly important in a town where everyone carries a gun.

Selling to Saddam

Former arms dealer Said K. Aburish describes how - with his help - the West started supplying Iraq.

THIS is the story of Iraq's first major arms deal with the West – the deal that broke Russia's monopoly.

During 1975 it became apparent to the rulers of Iraq that Russia was not supplying them with its most sophisticated military equipment, particularly advanced fighter and bomber aircraft. They complained, without success.

Iraq's generals hit back at the Russians by requesting that their government purchase an Anglo-French fighter, then one of the most advanced aircraft in the world. In my London office I received the call to begin unofficial negotiations with a British aircraft manufacturer. My exact mission was to determine this company's possible interest in supplying Iraq and to secure a six-per-cent commission agreement for my Iraqi associates.

A London friend of mine gave me the name of the company's director of the military aircraft division, John Hannay, whom I telephoned, telling him not that the decision was already made, but that 'our people' could help make it. His answers were polite, but non-committal until I mentioned the number of aircraft needed; 60 ($400 million worth). All pretence of disinterest vanished and the man's enthusiasm surfaced. He promised an answer after consulting his colleagues. Two days later the company confirmed its interest in working with us. I mentioned the six- per- cent commission and the need for an agreement. John Hannay is a model RAF officer and one of the finest gentlemen I have ever met. I gave him a full briefing on all I knew and undertook to arrange a meeting for him with my contact in Baghdad as soon as I received a written agreement. I also gave him the name of the company to which it should be assigned, Arab Resources Management (ARM) of Beirut, Lebanon. I declined to explain who and what Arab Resources Management were. Hannay promised to sound out the Foreign Office about their attitude towards supplying arms to Iraq.

My contact in Baghdad was delighted with the progress I had made but annoyed at the delay in processing the agreement. He was doing his best to delay the arrival in London of an Iraqi Air Force delegation whose job was to make an 'official' inquiry about the purchase to the company. Danger loomed. If the delegation made direct contact before a signed agreement was in our hands, then the company could do without us.

A few days later the proposed agreement arrived and I arranged a meeting between Hannay and Dr Ramzi A Dalloul, the chairman of ARM. The agreement was deposited in a Swiss bank for safe keeping because the company was haunted by the spectre of scandal. To them selling military aircraft was the same as selling cars but they still craved secrecy, insisting on calling the agreement a 'consultancy'.

Much to my surprise the initial response from the Foreign Office arrived before the Iraqi Air Force delegation did. The British Government 'would view with favour' such a request from the Iraqi Government. This was too good to be true. But the euphoria vanished into thin air when the Iraqi delegation made it known that they wanted a guarantee of 'uninterrupted flow of spare parts under all conditions'. Anxious to win the $400 million contract, the British Government stated they would 'endeavour to guarantee'. In reply the head of the Iraq delegation snapped, 'my English is not good, but either you endeavour or you guarantee' and with that he packed his bags and announced his departure for sunny Baghdad.

The atmosphere of crisis was suffocating. I saw $24 million slip through our fingers. I kept pleading with the company to think of a way out of the impasse. They kept pressurizing the Foreign Office, who wouldn't move. Would this so discourage the Iraqis as to throw them back into the arms of Russia?

It didn't. Instead, Dalloul pushed them towards the French Mirage F1 plane. And when the guarantee question was presented to the French manufacturer, Dassault, the company persuaded its Government to sign a document in 24 hours. Difficulties with the deal appeared later on when the Iraqis suspected the French of overcharging them by four million dollars an aircraft. This time Dalloul's message to me bridged the distance between intermediary and espionage work. 'Drop everything you are doing,' he screamed, 'and find out what the bastards charged other countries. You have unlimited expenses, use them to bribe, buy or bully anyone but get the prices at which the French sold the F1 to others.'

It was like going from the frying pan into the fire. The Institute of Strategic Studies would not help. Whatever contacts I had with intelligence establishments wanted more in return for their help than I was willing to offer. A CIA chum, however, recommended I tap the Peace Institute in Stockholm. They kept thorough files, he advised. To get at them I bribed the correspondent of an American weekly. This young man went to Stockholm and came back with the prize; he had copied all the price data they had on Mirage F1 sales. The Institute files were complete.

The French had overpriced the plane. The Iraqis began to stall. Jacques Chirac, the French Foreign Minister, was to visit Iraq shortly. When it was time to do business, Chirac asked about the Mirage F1 deal. Saddam Hussein, who was then Vice President, pushed a large sheet of paper in front of him. It showed an obvious attempt by the French to overcharge the Iraqis.

The imperturbable Chirac examined the document and volunteered – on the spot – a reduction of $1,750,000 on the price of each plane. Saddam Hussein accepted, and the gentlemen shook hands.

Later Saddam Hussein learned about Dalloul's commission agreement. To him this was betrayal because he considered Dalloul a trusted advisor who received a healthy retainer. He expelled Dalloul from Iraq, and furthermore claimed and got the commission from the French.

The winner was Saddam Hussein. He got his planes at the lowest possible price. It's not difficult to identify the losers. □

Illustration: Clive Offley

Said K Aburish is a Palestinian living in London. He gave up dealing in arms and wrote *Pay Off: Wheeling and Dealing in the Arab World (André Deutsch)* – from which this piece comes – in 1985.

Our boys, our toys

Professionalism, precision and manly control over sophisticated weaponry. Anuradha Vittachi unpicks the values that won the war – and their true cost.

Ten places were formally set for dinner in the elegant New York apartment. Nine of the guests were from the Third World. The tenth was an American who bombarded us loudly all evening with the same insistent question: what did the rest of the world think of America's victory in the Gulf War?

He wanted us to see America as the selfless rescuer, the hero in a white hat. No other conversations could take place. In the elevator down, we joked to defuse our irritation that the Third World had been bombarded by another American air attack. America's glorious image! America's superior strength! Nothing else mattered it seemed.

A few days later, George Bush was reported as saying, 'We've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all'. So America's ego was secure again. Two of its bastions of male power and identity, military might and money – had been dented recently from the dual blows of the Vietnam war and the spectacular rise of Japan's economic power: but perhaps the Gulf victory – and America's belated benevolence towards the Kurds – had restored America's image in the eyes of the world.

The cost of comforting America's ego has been catastrophic. What we most hear about in the North is the 'miraculously' low casualty level of the Allied troops. And occasionally we hear about the 100,000-plus Iraqi dead from aerial attack. But beyond these victims, hundreds of thousands of other human beings are now homeless, starving or in danger of disease epidemics because of the war. There is little mention of the many millions of destitute people in the Middle East and Asia and North Africa who will not now receive aid because so many billions have been spent on arms and armies. How many are really paying the price imposed by America and Iraq in their determination to be seen as tough-guy heroes?

The driving power of a nation's ego and its needs should not be underestimated. Hitler, to whom Saddam Hussein is constantly compared in the North, rose to fame after Germany had been humiliated by the Treaty of Versailles. It was the energy of this churning misery that Hitler scooped up and offered to transform into national glory. And hadn't Hitler written an allegorical novel, where the hero's name meant 'Nobody'? Hitler wanted Germany to become Somebody, just as Saddam wanted the Arab World to be seen as Somebody. And so did America, it seems, after Vietnam.

Asserting military and economic power over pieces of territory – the imperialistic impulse – has been the historic way in which national egos have reassured themselves they were Somebodies. Bigger is better in the macho world. But size alone isn't enough: righteousness is another key element.

The righteous male is always in control, is rational, civilized, intellectual, knowledgeable, sane, smart, efficient, speedy, precise, and usually white. Pale and bloodless, he seems to exist mostly above the neck. God is on his side.

The enemy, however, is chaotic: out of control, ignorant, mindless, hysterical, crazy, stupid, weak, wild, savage and often dark-skinned. And though he too imagines that God is on his side, that just proves how fanatical he is. He is 'all mouth and trousers' – an emotional character, easily led, more related to blood than brain. Women will be familiar with this light-and-shadow demarcation, having fallen foul of it for centuries.

In keeping with these perceptual requirements, the British press described the Allied soldiers during the Gulf War as professional – that is, trained to control

Photo : Mike Abrahams/Network

Photo : Abbas/Magnum

After the cheering, the horrors. Pride in technology diverts attention from the grim consequences.

their minds and emotions, while the Iraqis were brainwashed; blindly obedient, and fanatical – mere mindless puppets in the hands of their mad leader (the Nazi comparison again). Further, the Iraqis were butchers of Baghdad (bloody, savage), while the Allies were young knights of the sky (noble, detached, practically in heaven) acting with an old-fashioned sense of duty. Ah, duty: that which must be done - however painful it may be – by those who are righteous.

Just in case you miss the point, the Allied troops were portrayed as our boys – or, even more indulgently, as our lads. Why, you could practically see each freckle-faced youth with his pint of beer. But the Iraqis had no lads, only savage, undifferentiated hordes. We are back to the Middle Ages, when the Crusaders came to bring spiritual light to the dark masses of the Infidel.

The theme of the Allies' civilized superiority continues with the interminable adulation given to 'smart bombs', weapons that the Allies could control precisely (rational, efficient, mentally superior), while the Iraqis sent off random missiles (wild, crazy). In Britain, we saw the 'smart bombs' nightly on our television screens, hovering near their passive target, pointing at a small orifice, nuzzling in, penetrating, pausing, then exploding triumphantly. The whole country could share in the collective orgasm, cheering on the macho weapon which was both strong and smart as the best heroes should be.

After the cheering, the horrors should be remembered. That weapons are symbolic extensions of phallic force is almost too obvious to mention. But not only are weapons used as phalluses: phalluses are used as weapons. Rape is a deliberate weapon of war, a strategy for cowing civilian communities. In Bangladesh, for example, Pakistani soldiers were shown pornographic videos to incite them to rape Bengali women. In a few months of 1971 an estimated 400,000 women were raped.

And it should be remembered too that smart bombs made up only a tiny fraction – just seven per cent – of the arms used by the Allies. We haven't heard much about the random devastation caused by the not-so-smart weapons. The real number of casualties and the terrible experiences of those who suffered are far, far greater than we are told in this macho war. Nor, more compelling still, their terrible, daily human experience.

The most righteous of the macho males, however, the real elite, aren't just strong and smart. They are also stainless. Thus the myth of the pure-blooded Aryan, blond and blameless down to his genes. But surely no-one is racially 'pure', or always strong and rational, even if these attributes were desirable? Well, you might think so, but the macho male doesn't. He is desperately afraid of any contamination or weakness in himself being found out. Hitler, for example, hated Jews and wanted them destroyed not because he was racially 'pure' himself but because he feared he had Jewish blood and wanted that 'impurity' destroyed. What he couldn't eradicate inside himself, he tried to eradicate outside.

Paradoxically, the more you try to present your ego as angelically immaculate by hiding your dark stains even from yourself, the more of a monster you may become. Everywhere you go you will see reminders in other people of the characteristics you despise and repress in yourself – and if you despise and fear a large part of yourself, you will despise and fear a great many people.

For the white macho male trying to shore up his would-be-pure masculine ego, the greatest threat comes not from other men, whether Jewish, Arab, Japanese or any other shade of non-WASP, but from those who bear the marks of femininity. Homosexuals were murdered by Nazis – many of whom, logically

Photo : Burt Glinn/Magnum

Killing the symbol: inside the macho mind.

rather than oddly, were secretly homosexual themselves. And women in Nazi pornography were meted out hideous treatment.

In Greek mythology, Zeus, the symbol of male power, suspended his wife Hera, who symbolized the feminine principle, over a cloud with anvils tied to her ankles. The myth demonstrated the lengths to which macho men feel they must go in order to keep the feminine well repressed. The trouble is not only that women display femininity in full force. Worse, they arouse in men the qualities which they associate with being sissily feminine: their longing to merge, to be tender and vulnerable. What's more, women bring out in heterosexual men disturbing feelings of lust and jealousy, even love, which are not amenable to rational control. So the one-sided macho identity that men artificially construct for themselves, as cool, tough, rational, defended characters, well in control of their feelings, comes under threat in the presence of women: shadowy chaos seeps up from the dungeons and through the barricaded doors.

Ros Miles, author of *The Rites of Men*, says that 'Yorkshire Ripper' Peter Sutcliffe used to drive around displaying a notice that threatened: 'In this truck is a man whose latent genius if unleashed would rock the nation, whose dynamic energy would overpower those around him – better let him sleep!' Note that the macho woman-hater boasts not only of his 'dynamic energy' but of his 'genius': his assertion of the power of the male mind over those tempting, disgusting, mind-confusing female bodies.

Should anyone imagine that only Nazis or psychopaths suppurate with an intense loathing of women, they should try a poem or two written by a self-styled elite, the pilots from the US Air Force 77th Tactical Fighter Squadron stationed at Upper Heyford in the gentle slopes of Oxfordshire, England, brought to public attention by Joan Smith in *Mysogynies*. A strong stomach is required to read these gruesome outpourings, which use venereally-diseased women as the allegorical images of violent death (as in 'I Fucked a Dead Whore').

But why do men not simply welcome the inclusion of their feminine side? Why must Zeus hang Hera by her ankles? Psychologists believe that these men are still struggling against the powerlessness they experienced as babies, when they were helpless at their mother's all-powerful breast. They are still struggling to get out of her arms, to prove that they don't need her, that they now have a separate, independent masculine identity which is better than being merged with her female power. As the French psychologist Christiane Olivier says, from this fear of weakness and loss of control arises their compulsion to strike back at women and to strike first.

Strike the enemy, strike first if you can, whether your enemy is a woman or a black man. That is the macho ego's recipe for success and will remain so, as long as the danger and chaos represented by the 'wild' and bloodthirsty black man and the 'irrational' and menstrually-bloody woman remain entangled in the dark recesses of his unconscious. □

Former NI editor Anuradha Vittachi is currently working on a TV documentary on the arms trade to be shown on BBC2 this Autumn.

Tyrannosaurus wrecks

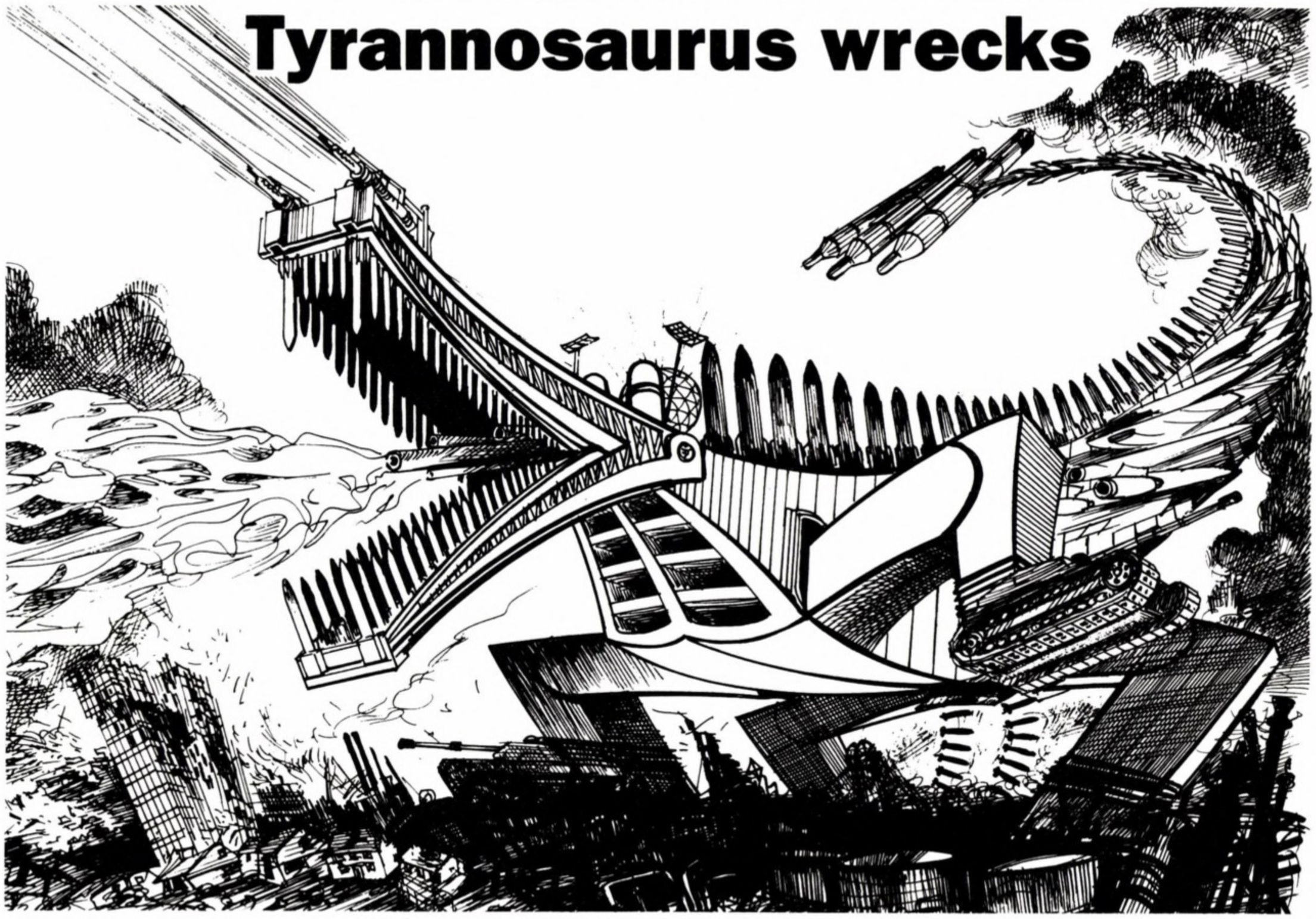


Illustration : Richard Willson

Making arms is good for the economy. Or so the story goes. But Stephen Dale finds the pet of the industrial world devouring its creators.

THERE are plenty of landscapes throughout the world – like the bombed-out streets of Baghdad or Beirut – which speak about the terrible destructiveness of militarism. But many North Americans are coming to see the blighted boulevards of Boston, Baltimore and New York as symbols of the same phenomenon.

Though spared the effects of actual military assault most urban centres in the United States have been battered by economic conditions which derive directly from the avarice of the military-industrial complex. Civilian industries collapsed creating huge unemployment and fuelling epidemics of drug abuse and crime during the 1980s, while the US military dinosaur was fed a budget that had doubled in size in just one decade.

The conventional wisdom used to be that military spending is good for an economy. That its activities galvanized – fertilized even – the rest of the economy. All that is changing as people become more critical and impatient. In the words of New York City Mayor David Dinkins: 'We need more homes for our people – not more home ports for nuclear battleships.' The cost of just two B-2 bombers could eliminate the city's 1991 deficit.

Siphoning money out of the civilian purse and into defence is not likely to do any country much good. The fate of the Soviet Union is a clear example. But the deterioration of the vital US economy is the most dramatic testament of how rapidly degenerative the process is.

The moment of truth may have been forestalled by a new wave of jingoism unleashed by the war against Iraq. But it's clear that North Americans will sooner or later have to face up to the conditions wrought by a weapons-centred economy.

What they can already see is that New York City – referred to in the New York Times as 'Calcutta, USA'— has more beggars on Broadway now than during the Great Depression; that infant mortality and life expectancy rates in many neighbourhoods are on a par with the Third World; that 83 per cent of the city's schools are in disrepair and that the water mains break at a rate of ten per week.

If they want to know why this is, all they need do is look at the statistics. These show that between 1947 and 1989, US military budgets totalled a staggering $8,200 billion – more than the joint value of all US industry's plants and equipment and all the country's civilian infrastructure combined. In other words, money given to the military after the Second World War could have rebuilt the largest portion of what is human-made on the surface of the United States.[1]

How on earth did the public give political support to this astronomical level of spending? One reason is that they had the jobs carrot dangled before their noses. But even this is no longer a winner today. Chicago, for example, pays an annual three billion dollars more in taxes to the Pentagon than it receives in military jobs.

The global picture is sadly similar. The world now spends one million million dollars on the military annually. Spending rose by 150 per cent between 1960 and the late 1980s. The fastest growth was in Third World nations, which now account for 20 per cent of military expenditures compared with seven per cent in 1960. That's an enormous burden considering the other problems they face. Military spending and debt servicing account for half of all government outlay in the Third World.

It's not just the raw sums that are important. The investment of human energy and resources count too. Half a million of the world's scientists are doing research and development for the military. This costs more than the total amount spent on developing technologies for new energy sources, improving human health, raising agricultural productivity and providing family planning.[2]

Bad business

The logic behind current calls for 'conversion' from military to civilian production is that resources would be better spent on solving social problems. But there is more to it than that. The military-industrial complex has certain special

characteristics that make it both inefficient in itself – and profoundly damaging to the economy in which it operates.

Seymour Melman, Professor of Industrial Engineering at Columbia University, has examined this in detail. He points out that military firms don't seek 'internal economies' to minimize cost because the defence services which buy their products don't care much about cost. So when military firms come to dominate an economy they spread their 'cost maximizing' methods to civilian producers.

Furthermore, unlike spending on roads, or education or machine tools, military investment has no positive impact upon a country's productive capacity.

The net effect is that American firms can no longer produce civilian goods as cheaply or as well as their overseas competitors, Japan and Western Europe. Britain, with its high investment in military industry, is in a similar position to the US.

The effects of the military economy don't stop there. Having abandoned most consumer manufacturing, Americans have had to borrow from abroad in order to finance their purchases of foreign consumer goods. The result: they have the biggest national debt in the world.

According to Melman there is really only one way of reversing this cycle of decay – a massive redirection of the funds now in the hands of the military. Superficial cuts to the defence budget just won't do it. His 'Save America Budget' calls for a 1,500 billion-dollar peace dividend over the next 10 years.

Defenders of military industries try to deny any link between military production and economic decline by pointing to the technological innovations arising from military-sponsored research. It sounds plausible. But a variety of studies have shown that any such civilian spin-offs are generally accidental and very expensive.

In her classic work *The Baroque Arsenal* British economist Mary Kaldor discovered that most military research conducted after the Second World War was for devices too specialized and too sophisticated to have any application in the civilian marketplace – which thrives on cheap, dependable, mass-producible goods.

Kaldor's thesis was reaffirmed last year by economists Erik Poole and Jean Thomas Bernard who found that military work had a negative impact upon the productivity of the Canadian aerospace and electronics industries.

Perhaps this has something to do with the penchant of military manufacturers for wasting huge amounts of public money. The Canadian Patrol Frigate program is a prime example. The Canadian Government had to bail out the two main contractors when it learned that the 12-ship program was two years behind schedule and each ship would probably require one million hours more work than budgeted for.

One contractor blamed this debacle on the 45,000 design changes its partner had ordered; the other retaliated with a more general charge of incompetence.

A new era

But many people throughout the world are saying that it is time to replace these woeful tales with civilian success stories. It's been estimated, for instance, that the Soviet Union could earn $40 or $50 billion more in foreign currency if it simply redirected from the military the funds necessary to expand its oil production.

Similarly, Britain could save $18 billion a year by merely bringing military spending into line with other European NATO members.

In the approaching era we can expect to see some big military spenders faced with unmanageable economic problems. Whether they like it or not they will have to rationalize their military industries and make strategic retreats from their costly Cold War game-plans.

But don't expect a reversal of the old militarist postures which conversion advocates would like to see as part of the package. That would require sustained public outrage over what all these expensive gizmos are actually used for. □

Canadian journalist Stephen Dale is currently producing a radio series on arms for CBC.

1 J Feldman, N Kninsky, Seymour Melman National Commission on Economic Conversion and Disarmament (ECD), June 1990. 2 Our Common Future, World Commission on Environment and Development, OUP, 1987.

Zé Luis' story

Battle tank blues

WITH his dark glasses and his uniform, Zé Luis looks like the comic-book Latin American military man who would gleefully send in armoured cars against his own people if they got too noisy. But 26-year old Zé Luis doesn't command armoured cars – he makes them.

Or used to, that is. Two years ago he and 750 fellow workers from the Engesa plant in Sao José dos Campos near Sao Paulo were suddenly laid off. The military-style uniform is from his new job – after months of unemployment – as a bank security guard.

Engesa became a major Brazilian success story through the export of cheap, reliable armoured vehicles ideal for use in civil wars or for controlling popular unrest. His business began to run into trouble in 1988 when an outbreak of peace in its two major markets – Africa and the Middle East – caught it over-extended in its $100 million 'dream project': the Osorio battle tank.

'It's a tank and a half, that Osorio,' says Zé Luis with an unmistakable note of pride at having been involved in the production of such a formidable piece of equipment.

The pride is evident in the way Zé Luis describes all Engesa's machines, which his job involved finishing off and packing for export to Iraq, Angola, Zimbabwe, Guinea, Cyprus, or China. The Urutu armoured personnel carrier – a best-seller thanks to its suitability for riot control – and the Cascavel armoured car (ideal for anti-guerrilla patrolling) are 'real precision vehicles. whatever mission you give them, they'll accomplish'.

Zé Luis accompanied one such 'mission', to Angola. As part of a maintenance team he was able to see what happens when a country ploughs all its resources into a long and debilitating civil war – making vast profits for the international arms business.

'I didn't like Angola much,' he says.'It was too hot, too poor, too dirty, too full of diseases. The Angolans are nice, simple people. They didn't seem to want the war.'

What Zé Luis saw didn't cause him to question the industry in which he worked. 'Sure we knew we were making things that killed, but that wasn't our business. The vehicles were commanded by people, and they were the ones responsible for the destruction.'

Though depressing, Zé Luis thinks the experience in Angola was worth it. 'The pay's a lot better if you get sent overseas'. And that, perhaps inevitably, is the crux of it.

'Engesa was always known as a good company in Sao José dos Campos,' Zé Luis explains. 'A job there guaranteed you credit in the shops. Engesa always paid on time and there were never strikes. So when the boss came down and told us the company was going through a bit of a crisis but that everything would be OK shortly, we believed him, didn't we? When they suddenly went and sacked 750 of us in one day, it was the last thing any of us expected from Engesa.'

There were more surprises in store, however. Since 1987 the company had been deducting the redundancy fund payments from the workers pay-packets – but not making the appropriate deposits with the federal social security fund. So now there is no cash for redundancy payoffs to the total 1,350 workers sacked. The company filed for bankruptcy in March 1990, admitting debts of $250 million.

'There are rumours that a British company is interested in buying Engesa,' says Zé Luis. 'It would be a good thing – as long as they didn't go back to building tanks. They shouldn't invest in making things that destroy. The company used to have a really good line of tractors – maybe they could invest in them.'

In fact, a deal has been practically sewn up between Engesa and British Aerospace which – according to the Brazilian press – hopes the have the plant running again soon... building tanks.

Alex Shankland

THE ARMS TRADE – THE FACTS

1 WORLD PRIORITIES

The world continues to spend more on arms than it spends on anything else.

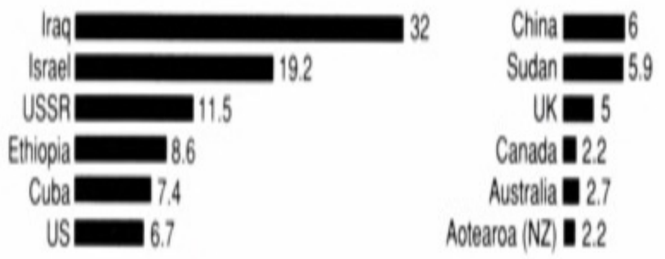
- In the past decade $8,000 billion was spent on arms – which could have provided all the people in the Third World with an income for three years.[1]
- The cost of mounting Operation Desert Shield – not including devastation caused by the Gulf war itself – was $53 billion. This is almost as much as the total annual foreign assistance that Third World countries get.[2]
- Six times as much public money in the world goes for research on weapons as for research on health protection.[1] The Third World spends 66% more on the military than on education.[3]
- There is one soldier per 240 people in the Third World, one doctor per 1,950. Yet the chance of dying from social neglect, malnutrition and preventable disease is 33 times greater than dying from war.[1]

2 BIG SPENDERS

Since the end of the Cold War the big spenders are cutting defence budgets – but they still spend a lot.

Global military spending fell by 5% in 1990 to about $950 billion. But this follows a decade of soaring spending. So although the US and USSR have cut defence budgets by 6% and 10% they are still spending 30% and 38% more than in 1980.[2]

Military spending as percentage of GNP[1]



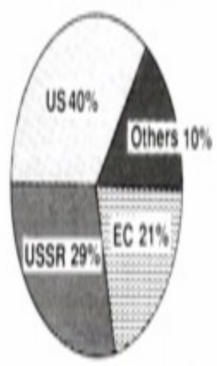
3 THE ARMS

The global market in conventional arms has shrunk by 35% in just one year – from 1989 to 1990 – and now stands at around $21 billion a year.[2] Up to 1989 USSR sold most.

ARMS SELLERS

Top exporters of conventional arms from 1985–89 in $ billions[5]

But in 1990 the US took first position[2]



The Third World accounted for only 1% of arms exports.[2]

ARMS BUYERS

Top importers of conventional arms from 1985-89 in $ billions[5]

But in 1990 Saudi Arabia leapt to the top of the league.[2]

Developing countries still buy 55% in value of the world's arms.[2] In 1989 they bought from:[5]

Who armed Saddam?

Iraq bought over $31 billion worth of arms between 1970-1989. These were supplied by several countries including all five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – USSR, US, UK, France and China.

The top suppliers were:[2]

USSR 19.2 bn (61% of total)
France 5.5 bn (18% of total)
China 1.6 bn (5%)
Brazil 1.1 bn (4%)
Egypt 1.1 bn (4%)
Others 2.8 bn (8%)

DEADLY DIET

The arms race looks like slowing down. But is it really? NI assesses the new picture in the light of the Gulf war.

4 REAL COSTS

If redirected, the money consumed by the military could eliminate Third World poverty.

- Tornado GRI – Function: high level precision bomber. Producer: British Aerospace (UK). Cost: $40m. The price of five of these could feed 20 million Africans for one month.[6]
- Patriot missile – Function: missile interceptor. Producer: Raytheon (US). Cost: $1m per missile. The price of 23 of these could keep two million Mozambicans in seeds, clothes, pots and storage facilities for one year.[6]
- Tomahawk Cruise Missiles – Function: nuclear capable missile. Producer: General Dynamics (US). Cost: over $1.4m each. The price of five of these could run UK charity Save the Children's budget for Ethiopia for 1990-91.[6]
- To create one job in the arms industry in India costs $13,500 compared with $3,800 in civilian industry, $90 in road construction, $80 in agriculture and $9 in commerce.[7]
- Two thirds of F-111 fighter planes are grounded for maintenance work at any one time. One hour's flight requires 98 hours' maintenance work.[7]
- A B52 bomber uses 3,600 gallons of fuel per hour of flight. An F-16 jet in training ignites more fuel in an hour than the average car driver consumes in two years.[8]

5 BIG DEALS

Following the Gulf war several big deals are in the pipeline.

- The US is negotiating sending $20 billion of military equipment to Saudi Arabia, and $1 billion to Israel.[9]
- British tank-makers Vickers are negotiating orders worth $2.5 billion with five Middle Eastern states.[10]
- Increased foreign demand for US Patriot Missiles is expected from countries in the Middle East.[10]
- The US budget for the Strategic Defence Initiative (Star Wars) is estimated to rise $2.9 billion to $4.58 billion.[4]
- Syria is negotiating a $2 billion deal to buy military equipment from the USSR.[11]
- Malaysia has just bought 300 UK Hawk fighters worth $400 million.[10]

6 CHANGING TRENDS

The arms trade is scaling down in many parts of the world – but gearing up in others.

GLOBAL

- In 1990 there was a reduction in nuclear forces for the first time ever. Fewer nuclear tests were conducted than in the past 30 years.[2]
- US defence spending is expected to fall from 6.7% of GDP to 3.6% in 1995 – the lowest since 1945. The Pentagon plans to scrap a dozen major defence systems including the MX missile and Trident submarine.[4]
- One in three of those employed in the military industry in the UK could be out of work by 1995.[12]
- Half a million jobs could be lost in the European arms industry over the next six years.[13] Output at the huge USSR Tula defence plant is down 72%.[4]
- EC major weapons procurement has dropped by 10%. Upgrading existing weapons systems is taking over from developing new weapons. European countries are moving towards co-production of weapons systems.[2]

THIRD WORLD

- Sub-Saharan African and Latin American nations are importing less weaponry due to the debt crisis and the ending of some 'hot' wars.
- Military aid to the Middle East is being increased to stimulate markets. Jordan is getting $28 billion from the US, and Egypt has had $7 billion of military debts waived.[9]
- More than 20 countries can now make or acquire biological and chemical weapons – seen in the Third World as the 'Poor Man's Atom Bomb'. Experts predict a chemical arms race.

STATE OF THE RACE

- Defence budgets are estimated to be growing at a rate of 2% a year in the Far East. The area is becoming increasingly insecure due to loosening of superpower influence. Japan is arming fast to protect itself against China.[14]
- Aotearoa (NZ) is joining with Australia in a $4 billion deal to buy frigates for the navy to boost defence industries in both countries. Aotearoa's military component exports (worth $8 million) are set to quadruple this year.[15]
- The India/Pakistan arms race continues apace;[10] India's defence spending recently went up by $450 million.[16]

CONTROLS

- Some initiatives are getting off the ground and should produce massive cuts within the next three years. They are the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, 1987, and the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, 1990. The Missile Technology Control Regime (MCTR), meanwhile has increased its membership from 7 to 16 and aims to become global.
- Other initiatives are having less success. The Strategic Arms Reductions Talks (START), 1990, which should have led to massive US and USSR cuts, have so far failed to conclude a treaty. And the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), 1990, has seen no clear political breakthrough.[2]

1 *World Social and Military Expenditure*, Ruth Leger Sivard, (World Priorities, 1989). 2 *Stockholm Institute of Peace Studies (SIPRI) Yearbook, 1991*. 3 *World Social and Military Priorities 1987/89*. 4 *South Magazine*, London, March 1991. 5 *SIPRI Yearbook, 1990*. 6 *Oxfam, 1991*. 7 *The Baroque Arsenal*, Mary Kaldor, (Verso, 1983). 8 *Gar Smith, Earth Island Journal, 1991*. 9 *Guardian*, 6 March, 1991. 10 *Independent on Sunday*, 3 March, 1991. 11 *BBC Radio 4*, May 16, 1991. 12 *The Engineer*, UK, 28 March 1991. 13 *Eurobusiness*, December 1990. 14 *Flight International*, 6 December, 1990. 15 *Peace Researcher*, Lincoln University, Aotearoa (NZ), 1991. 16 Mari Marcel Thekaekara, *New Internationalist*, May 1991.

Photos (clockwise from top left) : Mark Edwards; Sven Simon; Abbas/Magnum; Suresh Karadia/Camera Press; Jean Claude Francolon/Gamma Main illustration : Hector Catholica

Does khaki become you?

Are women pawns or players in the war game? Cynthia Enloe investigates.

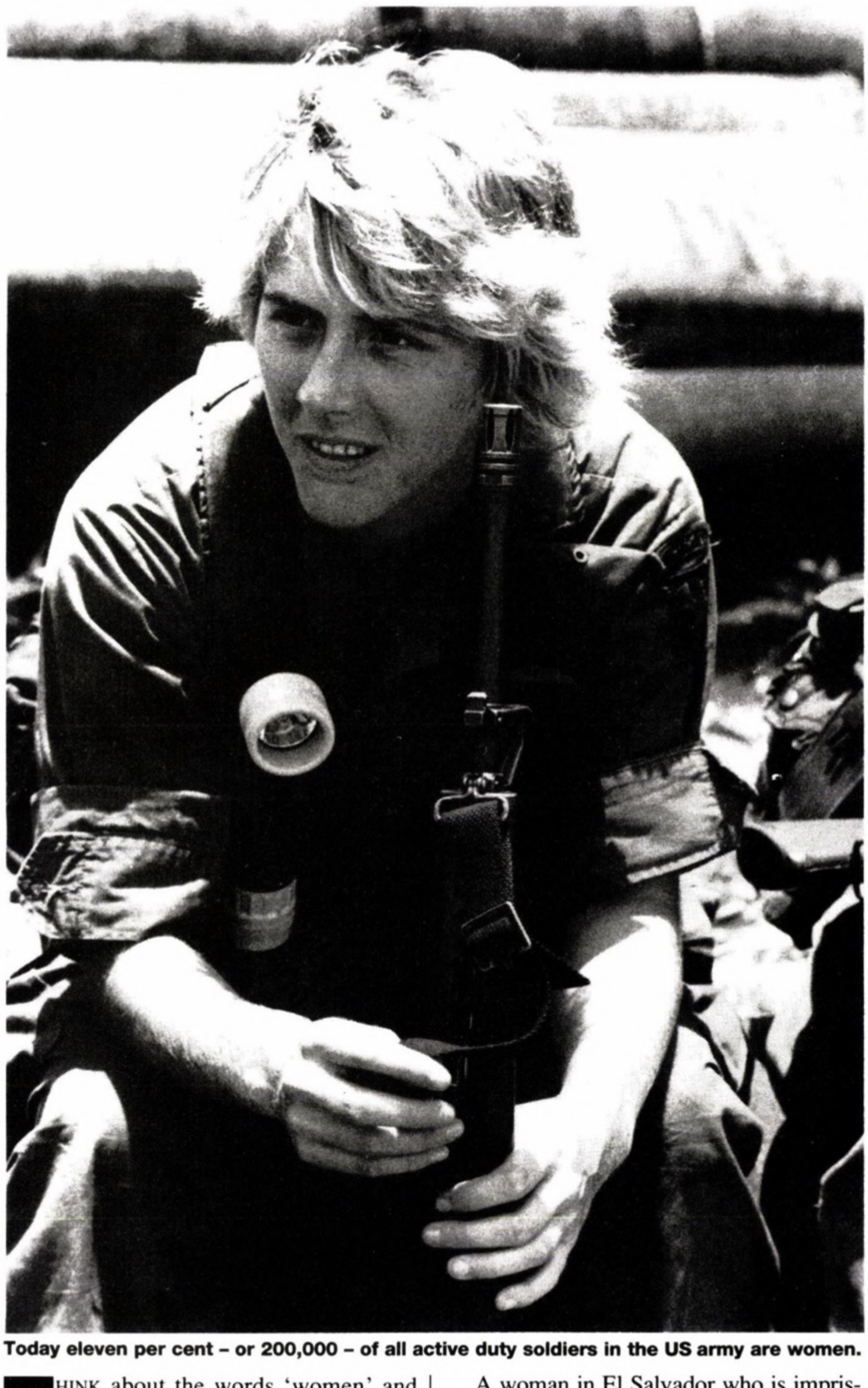


Photo : Jenny Matthews/Format

Today eleven per cent – or 200,000 – of all active duty soldiers in the US army are women.

THINK about the words 'women' and 'war'. Chances are another word will soon flash across your mind: victim. This is to be expected. Four out of five victims of war today are civilians – and most of them are female. Women are the majority of the world's refugees fleeing the violence of inter–state wars with their dependent children. In the conventional iconography of militarization women are the victims and men are the perpetrators.

A woman in El Salvador who is imprisoned and tortured by her own government's army or the police has her life shaped by their needs – by their idea of who or what is 'the enemy'. She is forced to hand over control in a very fundamental way.

There are more subtle ways in which the transfer of control to the military can occur. Two years ago women from seven coun tries toured the United States to tell Americans what it was like to live under the shadow of a US military base. They came from Honduras, South Korea, the Philippines, Britain and Germany, and were joined by a woman from Poland who described what it was like living near a Soviet army base.

They spoke of the proliferation of prostitution, the health hazards of military wastes and sonic booms, the loss of arable land and competition for housing. They talked about harassment on the streets at night, the spread of VD, AIDS and drugs, and the pervasive racist assumptions about local peoples' culture.

Poor people inevitably get the brunt of all this. But what is often overlooked is how differently it affects men and women. Men may feel humiliated watching so many poor women from their society providing sexual services to male soldiers – especially if those soldiers are foreigners. To retain their own sense of honor they may insist even more strenuously that the women in their families remain 'pure'. Or the men may turn their humiliation into anger at the foreign bases and thus into nationalist campaigning.

But the women will feel fear and anger not only towards the soldiers but also towards their overbearing husbands and fathers, obsessed with female 'purity'. And while prostitution is frequently used as a rallying point for newly mobilized nationalists, the opinions and political analyses of the prostitutes themselves are disregarded.

Co-operators

Yet the step-by-step process by which the values and needs of the military gains primacy in any society's life cannot be entrenched without considerable co-operation from women. The most obvious example is if they become soldiers themselves.

During the Gulf war the women in the pale khaki camouflage fatigues kept appearing in our magazines and on our TV screens.

Although women have supported regular armies of warring states for the past 80 years, this war was the first in which they played such a central role in soldiering.

Thousands served the US 'manpower' planners. They attracted a lot of media attention precisely because they overturned the stereotype of the female victim of war. Interviewers wanted to know how they were handling chauvinism in their mostly male crews? Did they expect to be in a combat zone? Did they worry about being good wives and mothers to the families they had left back home?

Some did not come home. By the time the Bush administration declared a ceasefire in the war against Iraq, five had been killed in action, seven more had been killed in non-hostile operations.

Other countries sent female soldiers to the Gulf too. The British military sent approximately 300. The Canadian Government – recently forced to drop its women-in-combat ban as a result of a rights

suit – sent 33 to its base in Qatar. And the Australians broke new ground in January 1991 by deploying seven female sailors to a potential war zone for the first time.

Women were not so obvious in Middle Eastern forces – but their numbers are growing. Most served in 'non-combat' units such as air supply, cartography and administration. Others were used in home-front militias. Even highly patriarchal Saudi Arabia began civil defence training programmes for women during the crisis.

The presence of these soldiers also raised questions in many people's minds about the exact relationship today of women to militarism. Was a radical change going on? Some believed the tightly-knotted bond between masculinity and militarism was being loosened. Others suggested that this would force armies now dependent on female staff to shed at least a few of their patriarchal ways.

More worrying perhaps was the notion that in their quest for equality, women were becoming more receptive to militaristic ideas. Many believed they could win 'first-class citizenship' the way men can by serving in the uniformed military – in spite of all the contrary evidence of sexual harassment and discrimination.

Camp followers

The fact is, women are very vulnerable to military values and beliefs even though these rarely, if ever, serve their long-term interests. This vulnerability is crucial – for if women stopped giving support the system would collapse.

For example, the Bush administration was probably only able to sustain the public legitimation it needed to conduct the American war against Iraq because the gender gap between women and men over the issue of use of force shrank dramatically.

In a mere five days after the launch of the air war against Baghdad, American women's opposition to their Government's resort to force contracted from over 40 per cent to a little over 20 per cent. Why and how did so many women start supporting military policy makers, despite the fact that militarization robs women not only of physical security but of political influence too?

The answer lies in the way in which military beliefs and values are gradually internalized. Like imagining that serving in your country's forces is more honorable than working as a social worker; or thinking that national security issues are more politically relevant than issues of nutrition. Or valuing high-tech weaponry over low-tech agricultural equipment or feeling more national pride when your government has won a war than when your government has resolved an international conflict diplomatically. Alternatively, you could find yourself according guerilla freedom-fighters higher status than members of the community who perform unarmed roles.

Joan's story

I am a dangerous woman

I am a dangerous woman
Carrying neither bombs nor babies
Flowers or molotov cocktail
I confound all your reason, theory, realism
Because I will neither lie in your ditches
Nor dig your ditches for you
Nor join your armed struggle
For bigger and better ditches.
I will not walk with you nor walk for you,
I won't live with you
And I won't die for you
But neither will I try to deny you
Your right to live and die.
I will not share one square foot of this earth with you
While you're hell-bent on destruction
But neither will I deny that we are of the same earth,
Born of the same Mother
I will not permit
You to bind my life to yours
But I will tell you that our lives
Are bound together
And I will demand
That you live as though you understand
This one salient fact.

I am a dangerous woman
because I will tell you, sir,
whether you are concerned or not,
Masculinity has made of this world a living hell
A furnace burning away at hope, love, faith, and justice,
A furnace of My Lais, Hiroshimas, Dachaus.
A furnace which burns the babies
You tell us we must make
Masculinity made Femininity
Made the eyes of our women go dark and cold,
sent our sons - yes sir, our sons -
To War
Made our children go hungry
Made our mothers whores
Made our bombs, our bullets, our 'Food for Peace',
our definitive solutions and first strike policies
Yes sir
Masculinity broke women and men on its knee
Took away our futures
Made our hopes, fears, thoughts and good instincts
'irrelevant to the larger struggle'.
And made human survival beyond the year 2000
An open question.
Yes sir
And it has possessed you.

I am a dangerous woman
because I will say all this
lying neither to you nor with you
Neither trusting nor despising you.
I am dangerous because
I won't give up, shut up, or put up with your version of reality.
You have conspired to sell my life quite cheaply
And I am especially dangerous
Because I will never forgive nor forget
Or ever conspire
To sell yours in return.

Joan Cavanagh has served many jail sentences for acts of civil disobedience. This poem appears in *My Country is the Whole World* (Women's Peace Collective, Pandora Press 1984).

Photo : Jenny Matthews/Format

A Guatemalan women seeking a lost relative, becomes 'the enemy'. Over 40,000 people have disappeared since 1967 in the war the military is waging against its citizens.

Militaristic beliefs aren't so much concerned with what you consider good or bad but how you think the world works. Perhaps you assume that the world is full of enemies and that it is naive to expect most conflicts to be settled without violence or coercion. Or that hierarchical arrangements are the most natural and efficient way to organize people.

For years, historians and social commentators have described this process as if the only ones affected were men. Or else they have simply failed to distinguish between male and female citizens. But today feminists from many parts of the world are exposing how women as women internalize militaristic values and beliefs.

Sexual difference

Why does it happen? The fundamental reason has to do with sexual equality – or rather the lack of it – in our societies. Ironically, it is because women are oppressed that they end up internalizing and supporting military values and beliefs. They do not espouse these in a vacuum but in the process of trying to live up to their society's standards of femininity.

For example, an Iranian wife who has lost her husband in the Iran-Iraq war may feel she has to accept her government's portrayal of a patriotic widow as a woman who will agree to *muta* – a short-term marriage-of-convenience with a returning veteran.

A Vietnamese worker may have to swallow her disappointment and resentment at having to give up her job to a male soldier returning from service in Cambodia because she believes that men have done the more important work of defending the country's interests. She may think these men deserve access to civilian jobs – even if this means unemployment for many women.

And if women cannot be the fighters themselves they can at least prove their patriotism by urging their sons to enlist, or by coping proudly with war-caused food shortages.

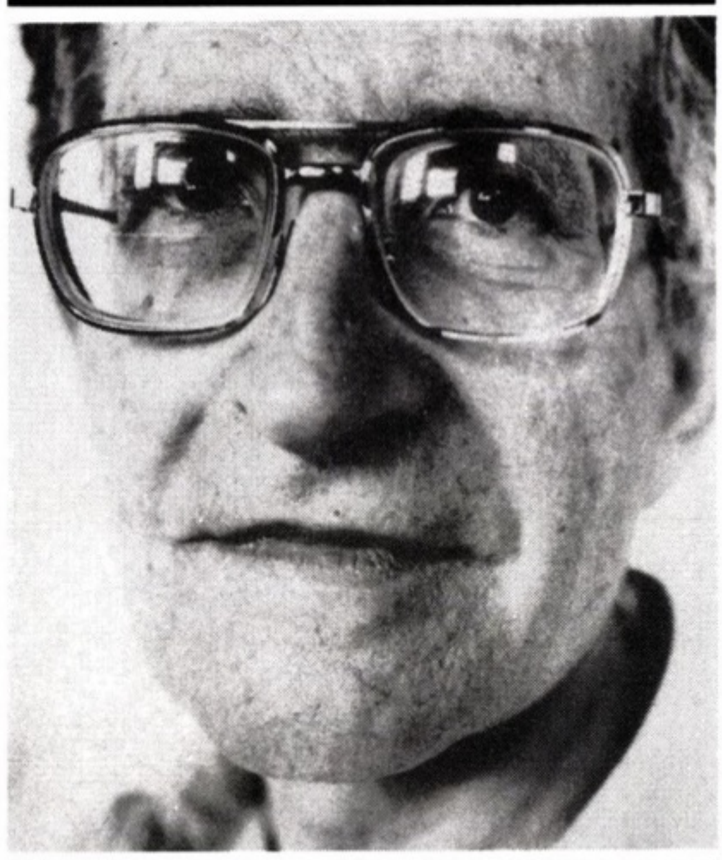
In their everyday lives women all over the world are both victims and participants in the militarization game. It presents us with many dilemmas. For example, how does someone aspiring to be a good mother show support for her soldier son or daughter without voicing support of her government's use of armed force?

Recognizing women as both victims and participants may cause unease. But focussing on everyday examples does help us realize what a contradictory thing militarism is – and how much it relies upon women to maintain it. This, in turn, could lead us to developing ways of opposing it. □

Cynthia Enloe teaches at Clark University of Massachusetts. Her latest book is *Bananas, Beaches and Bases (Pandora, 1990).*

Arms to Order

What role will arms play in the new world order? Two leading activists give their views.



NOAM CHOMSKY

Professor of linguistics and intellectual gadfly at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

'IF you are selling textiles you can hire a big auditorium and display your wares. The US is not selling textiles. It hires the Sinai and the Iraqi desert to show off in; that's basically our showroom. Every Israeli war and every US war in the region is part of an export promotion device.

'In my view, the new world order is mostly fraud. President Bush's main objective in outlining the concept is to tell the rest of the world that what the US says goes: in this new world order the US will use the sale of arms aggressively to bolster the sagging economy and solidify political alliances.

'Arms trade is just one aspect of military production and military production is just one aspect of what is sometimes called military Keynesianism. This is the technique of industrial management whereby the state ensures the viability of high technology industries by creating a military market for its products and by underwriting research and development.

'In the early 1940s it was understood that the only way to keep capitalist industrial societies going was to have very substantial state intervention. The United States did it by getting the taxpayer to subsidize high-technology industries – of which weapons are a part. The arms trade cannot be understood outside this whole system. One of the few sectors of the American economy that is competitive in the world market is military hi-tech, and it has to be sold. It's no coincidence that President Bush announced $18 billion worth of arms sales to Middle East nations just after the fighting stopped in the Gulf.

'Bush's main concern is not peace in the Middle East. It is his own constituency back home: the wealthy and the privileged. It is in the interests of this constituency – both in the US and in Britain – that Arab oil profits are spent on US or British products. The huge flow of capital that comes out of oil production mostly finds its way back to the US and Britain. That's why the Kuwaiti Investment Corporation is based in London. It's explicit. If you look back at the declassified documents of the late 1950s, both the British and the Americans stress that Kuwaiti profits must be used to prop up sterling.

'What's more, the United States considers itself entitled to some payback for providing the market that creates such vast profits for oil-producing nations. We want the flow of petrodollars to come back here. That's very important. There are lots of ways to do this – and one of them is arms sales. And one way to sell them is to ensure military confrontation.

But with the end of the Cold War we need new pretexts for old actions. And so before taking military action in Kuwait

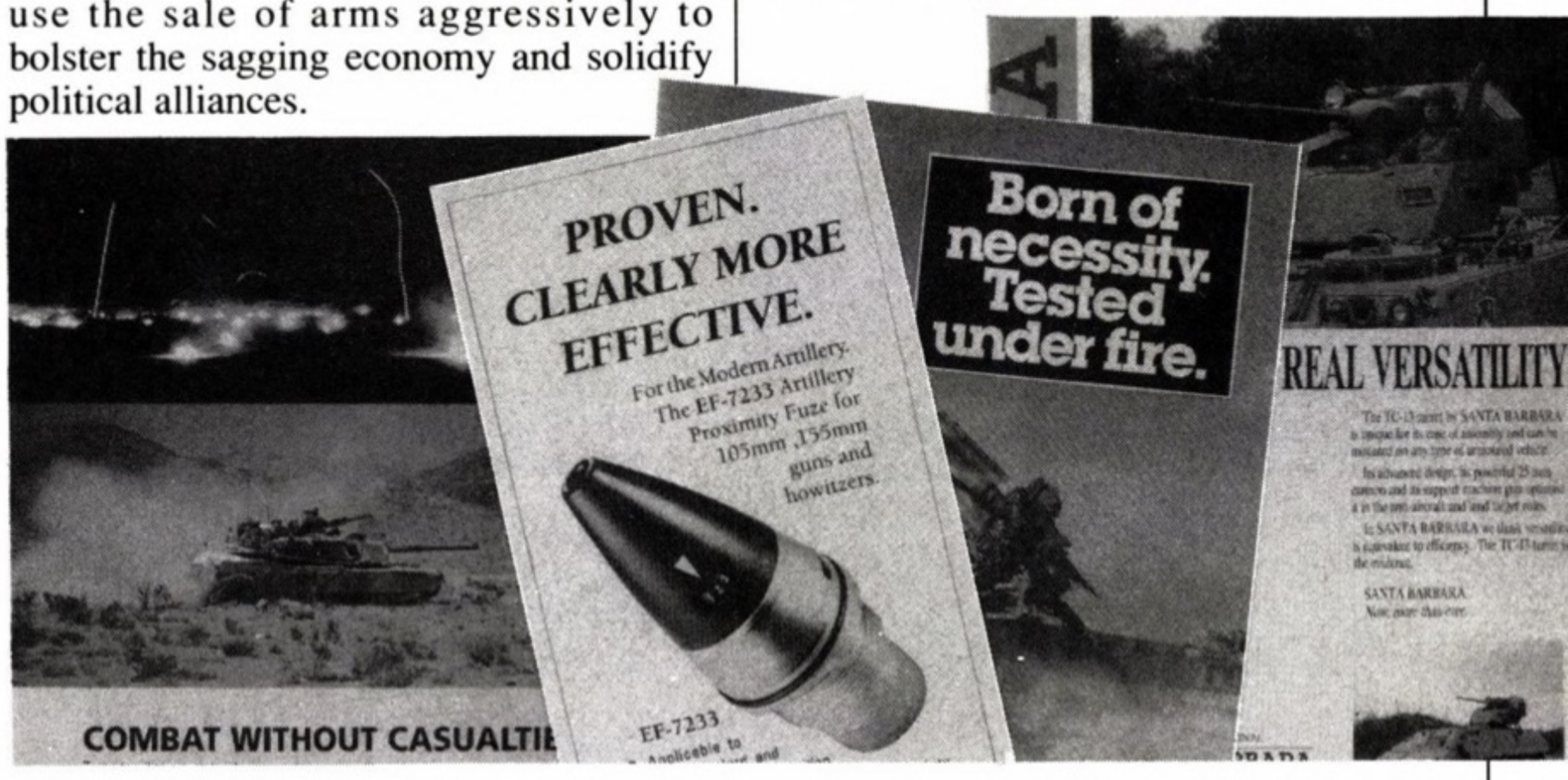


Photo : Steve Pike/Network

the US had to cast Saddam Hussein as a madman – even though we had been selling arms to this madman within months of his invasion.

'One of the main thrusts of the Reagan-Bush policy from the beginning has been to try and establish in principle that the world should be ruled by force. The US is saying repeatedly that it rejects diplomacy, rejects peaceful means. That was true right through central America and it has been true in the Middle East. Others have been expected to adapt to that – no matter what they feel.

'But the best way to control a Third World country is to control its security forces. If you control its military and its police, you don't really care what kind of political system it has. And how do you control the military? Arms sales and training. That's the best way of getting developing nations firmly within the US camp.

'There is some hope for those who want to change all this. The possibilities of US foreign intervention have narrowed over the past few years. No longer does the US Government have the same freedom to pursue drawn-out, policy-based military interventions. Many in the US would not have supported a long war in the Gulf, for example. This means there are lots of opportunities for people who are trying to do something. But it requires massive education. People have to learn to understand the realities of the world around them. And the key reality is that the sale of arms abroad will not abate until political incentives become bigger than the short-term economic ones.' □

PETRA KELLY

Founder-member of the German Green Party, and tireless activist despite having recently lost her seat in parliament.

'I THINK this must be the worst time to try and reduce the arms trade. The European Community has already decided that it is going to make arms sales to the Third World an economic priority. It wants to overtake the US in this area. At an internal meeting of European defence ministers at Gleneagles, Scotland, they discussed how the peace dividend (arising from the ending of the Cold War) could be used to produce new, cheaper, harmonized weapons systems for export to the Third World. This got very little coverage in the news.

'So the new Europe is not going to stand in solidarity with the Third World. It is only concerned with its economic strength. Even countries like Switzerland and Sweden are going against their traditional neutrality and becoming heavily involved in arms exports. The freeing up of the European Market after 1992 will make it even easier for the arms trade.

'There will be more arms sales in the Third World – and more regional wars there too. Europe and the US will be the superpowers – with the USSR playing a reduced role because of its own internal problems. We are going to see a kind of global NATO with two heads – one the US and one Europe – and with the Third World on the other side.

'Things looked so hopeful after the end of the Cold War. There were big conferences in Moscow and in New York on converting the arms industry to civilian use. The companies understood the problem and were prepared to discuss it. The Green budget seemed feasible. There were good initiatives and the chance of a really strong arms control.

'We thought the 1990s would be the decade when the world worked out alternative security arrangements, when the idea of ecological security as opposed to military security would get off the ground. Lots of grassroots groups were involved in looking into non-military forms of defence. People in Eastern Europe seemed to want the same thing. Then the Gulf war tipped the balance – and all that seems to have gone.

'Now Bush and Co are arguing that selling more arms in the Middle East will stabilize the region – which, of course, is nonsense. There is no talk about the 'peace dividend' any more. Even the Greens in Germany approved the sale of arms to Israel. They saw it as some sort of compensation for the past – as though contributing to the arms build-up in that area could be anything other than a very bad form of compensation.

'It is frightening how brainwashed the public have been by the media. People said it was a very good war, it showed that the machinery made sense. It was like twenty years of consciousness-raising disappeared overnight. The most important thing now is military might, more important than economic power.

'Meanwhile the full extent of the damage to the environment cannot yet be estimated. Scientists are saying this damage goes deep into the soil and that it may not possible to grow food in the region for many years to come. The amount of TNT (explosive) dropped is unimaginable. Virtually every United Nations convention was broken – including not damaging food supplies, chemical and nuclear facilities. It was an out-and-out war against nature on both sides. Neither side gave a damn. The Gulf region was the cradle of civilization, Ancient Mesopotamia. And we have destroyed it. To me that seems very symbolic.' □

Photo: Popperfoto

Noam Chomsky was interviewed by Steve Simurda; Petra Kelly by Vanessa Baird. We wanted to interview Henry Kissinger too, but learned that he would require a fee of around $30,000. Unfortunately our budget does not stretch to this.

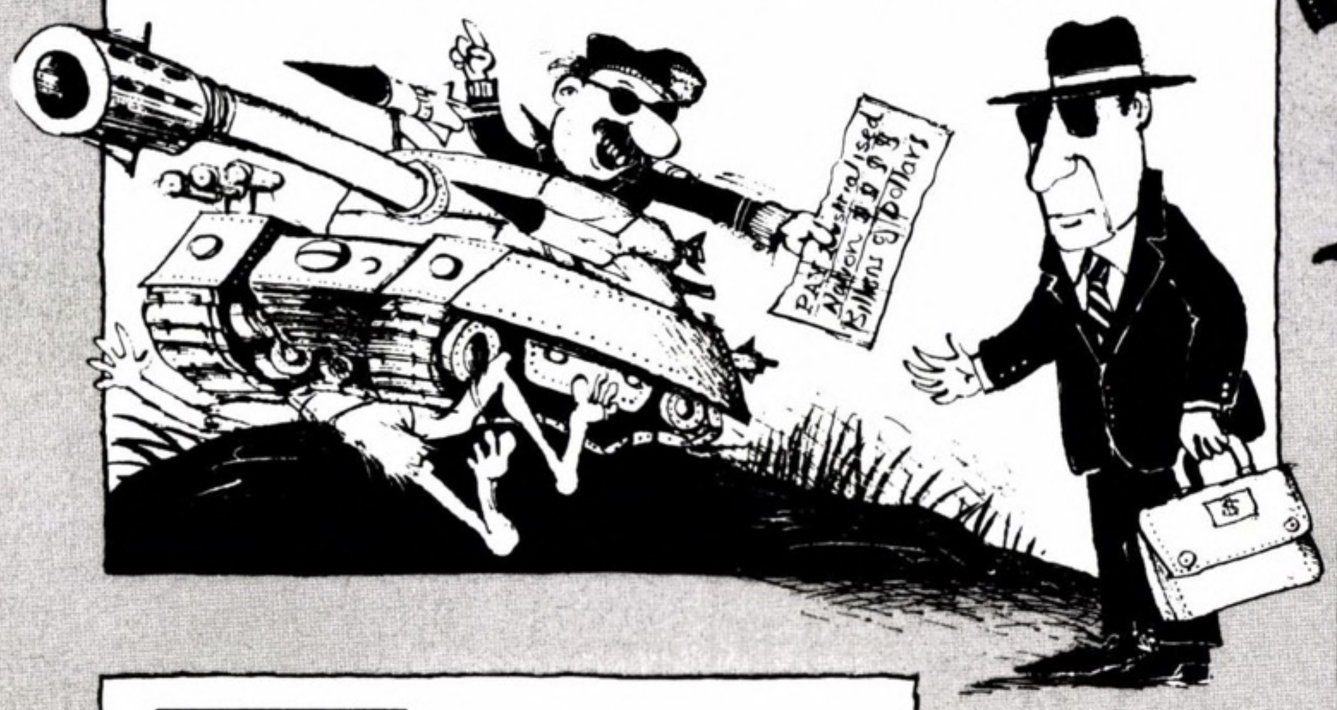
Photos : Chris Steele-Perkins/Magnum; Richard Cooke/Camera Press.

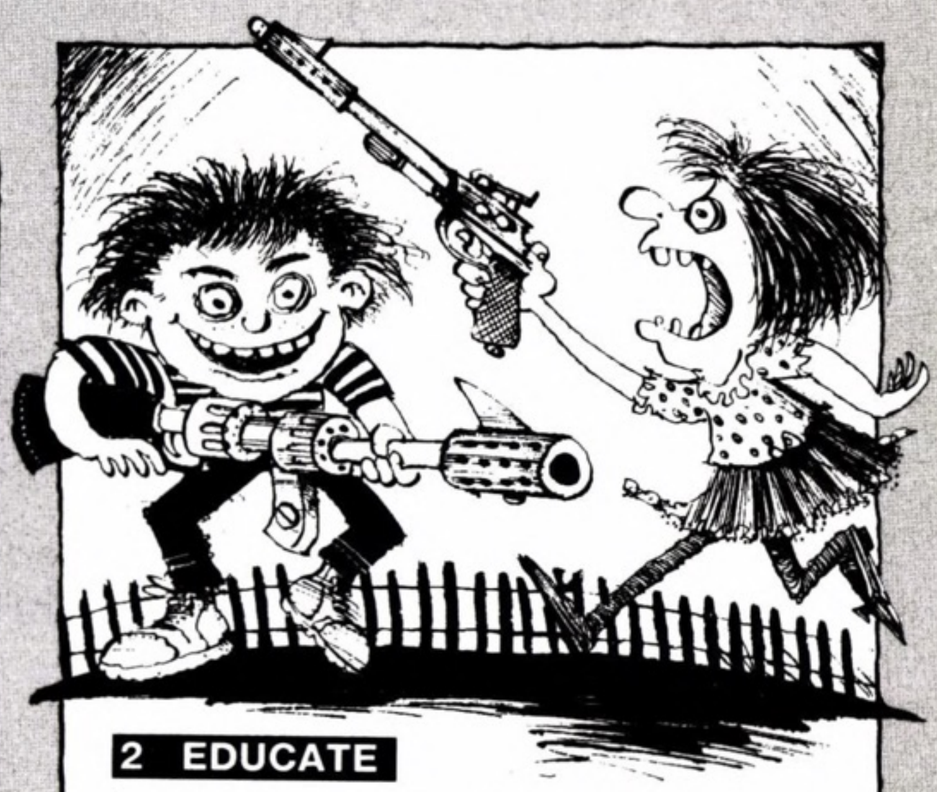
Simply...

DISARMING – eight steps

1 CAMPAIGN

Nearly all arms-producing countries sell weapons to nations with poor human rights records or with military dictatorships. You can put pressure on your government to stop doing this – and to cease selling to any part of the world where a conflict is raging. Picketing arms fairs and exhibitions discourages local authorities from hosting such events.





2 EDUCATE

In our culture we learn history as a series of battles won. But schools could teach it as a story of humanity and human achievements, with wars as tragic disruptions. Then children might learn that it is smarter to resolve conflicts peacefully than with their fists. They should be discouraged from playing with war toys which make war and violence seem an inevitable part of normal life.

3 EXPOSE

The arms trade thrives on secrecy. In most countries it is extremely difficult for members of the public to find out who is exporting what to whom. This makes it virtually impossible to lodge a protest before the sale has been made. Demand that your government publish details of all arms transfers in an Export Register – as they do in Sweden. It's your right to know.

4 WORK

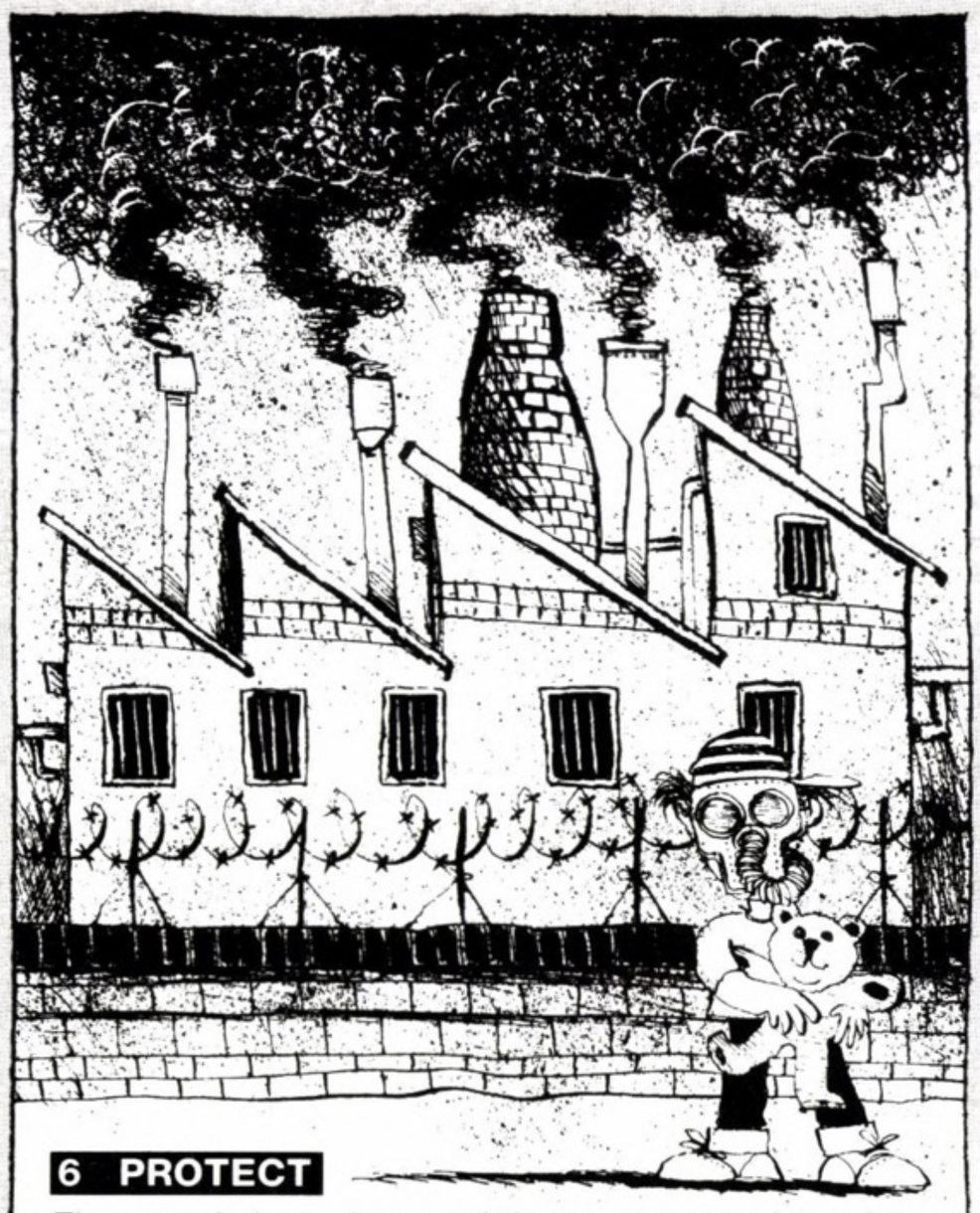
Millions of people work in arms and arms-related fields. Through your trade union you can try to influence decisions about what contracts your company takes on. Put pressure on management to consider producing something more socially useful. With the arms industry in deep recession this may be the only way of saving jobs. If you are doing scientific research avoid areas with military applications or funding. Or better still, study ways in which existing military science could be converted to civilian use. If you are in the armed forces, don't you think your skills might be more creatively used elsewhere?

Illustrations: Korky Paul

towards a future

5 BOYCOTT

So many firms are connected with arms manufacture it would be impossible to boycott them all. Some are making genuine attempts to move out of the field. But some companies are making no attempts to diversify at all – or are actually increasing their military investment. Many of these make consumer items – radios, kettles, cars – which you could boycott (see Action Page 25). Ask your local council if it is investing in military interests – and avoid unwittingly doing so yourself by taking out an ethical investment or pension scheme.



6 PROTECT

The arms industry is one of the most energy intensive and polluting especially if radioactive materials are being used in production. Public protest makes this harder to conceal. And defence industries could – with government backing – put their technical skills into finding ways of disposing of waste and cleaning up the environment. They could start by cleaning up the many, deeply polluted military bases no longer in use now that the Cold War is over.

7 CONTROL

Arms control can easily slide to the bottom of the political agenda. Ask your politicians what has happened to the peace dividend produced by the end of the Cold War. Keep up the pressure for cuts in defence budgets. Your government should be taking a lead in the United Nations to make international arms control agreements integrated and comprehensive – with harsh penalties for cheats.

8 THINK

The greatest barrier to creating a demilitarised society is in our heads. We have got used to believing in the need for armies and the inevitability of war. But standing armies are a relatively modern invention. And most conflicts are caused not by inevitable disagreements but by suspicion and distrust. We need more openness of mind – and information; more willingness to discuss and debate and learn about each other's differences.

Darkness at noon

The year is 2025 and two children are watching a television documentary. Brian Tokar and Gayle Hardy look back at the present.

INFERNAL plumes of fire soar into the sky, surrounded by billowing black clouds. Rotting carcasses and thick black pools punctuate the greyish yellow sand. Tammy, aged 13, is sitting wide-eyed watching this grim apocalypse on a megascreen when 11-year-old Tommy comes in. They are staying with their grandmother, Sarah. They do not have a megascreen at home. Their parents say it's a waste of energy.

'You'll get into trouble,' warns Tommy. 'She told us to go to bed ages ago.'

'Ssshhh... She won't remember.'

'What are you watching?'

'It's the Gulf war. Now shut up.'

'You'll give yourself nightmares... Why are you watching it?'

'It was a turning point in the history of humanity, that's why. Now be quiet will you or go to bed. I'm trying to hear the commentary.'

The commentator's voice intones gravely:

'By initiating an historically unprecedented bombing campaign against Iraq in January 1991, the US, the UK and their allies unleashed an environmental holocaust on a scale which they barely understood. They also succeeded in distracting the world's attention from many of the most profound environmental and human problems, such as global warming and world hunger.'

'What's all that black stuff?'

'Ssshhh!'

'The most striking immediate consequences of the Gulf war itself – beside the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives – were the raging oil-well fires in Kuwait and the massive oil spills in the waters of the Gulf. Both of these had consequences for the entire Middle East, and places far beyond.

'The burning of oil wells began in the second week of the War, and reached a ghastly climax in its final days. By the beginning of March 1991, at least 600 Kuwaiti oil wells were ablaze, incinerating over five million barrels of oil a day. The skies of Kuwait were blackened even in midday – and severe acid rain was measured as far west as Bulgaria and as far east as Pakistan.

'The wildlife...'

'I didn't know there was* ever *any wildlife in the Gulf ...'

'... was devastated by the effects of 60 million gallons of oil being spilled in the Gulf's waters. Then in March of 1991 Carl Sagan and other scientists began to predict that the cloud of soot from the burning wells could easily reach South Asia, blocking sunlight and perhaps bringing freezing temperatures well into the spring and summer. In a worst scenario, 20 to 40 per cent of the northern hemisphere would be affected.'

'That must be the Big Chill Grannie talks about ...'

'But there were other less obvious consequences. Allied bombing of chemical and nuclear facilities resulted in releases of highly toxic substances including cyanides, chlorine, nitrogen dioxide and dioxins. The bombing of sewage and water facilities created a widespread epidemic of cholera. Allied bombing also created uninhabitable chemical zones and contaminated rivers and canals that fed the Tigris River upstream from Baghdad. Neither side was forthcoming as to whether any nuclear facilities were hit, but there were reports during the war of elevated levels of radioactivity measured in the mountains of Turkey.'

'Were they still using nuclear power then?

'Oh yes. They were still environmentally illiterate in those days. Ask Grannie.'

'The Gulf war also illuminated the environmental damage done by all military activities. For example, allied tanks in Saudi Arabia destroyed fragile desert soils. And soldiers left waste and sewage equivalent to a city of half a million people. They also used huge quantities of water and fuel. And US forces used oil for everything – from jets to air conditioning. Even in peacetime they would burn up 37 million tons of oil a year. But during the war they used more than 20 million gallons a day. It's not surprising, considering that an aircraft carrier would average up to 150,000 gallons a day, a B52 bomber 3,600 gallons per hour.'

'I don't understand. I thought the war happened because oil was a valuable, limited resource. If it was so precious what were they doing wasting it? All they had to do was use alternative energy sources. Didn't they know about solar, wind and wave power?'

'Sure, they knew. It just wasn't in the interests of those with the power to invest large sums developing it.'

'But...'

'Look, I'm trying to follow this programme...'

'The military also left massive pollution. In the latter half of the twentieth century armies used and disposed of vast quantities of chemical solvents, paints, acids, lubricants and other toxic materials, in addition to fuel and explosives. In the 1980s the US Pentagon was generating more toxics in one year than the top five US chemical companies combined – without even counting the emissions from the Department of Energy's nuclear weapon plants.'

'Why didn't the military protect the

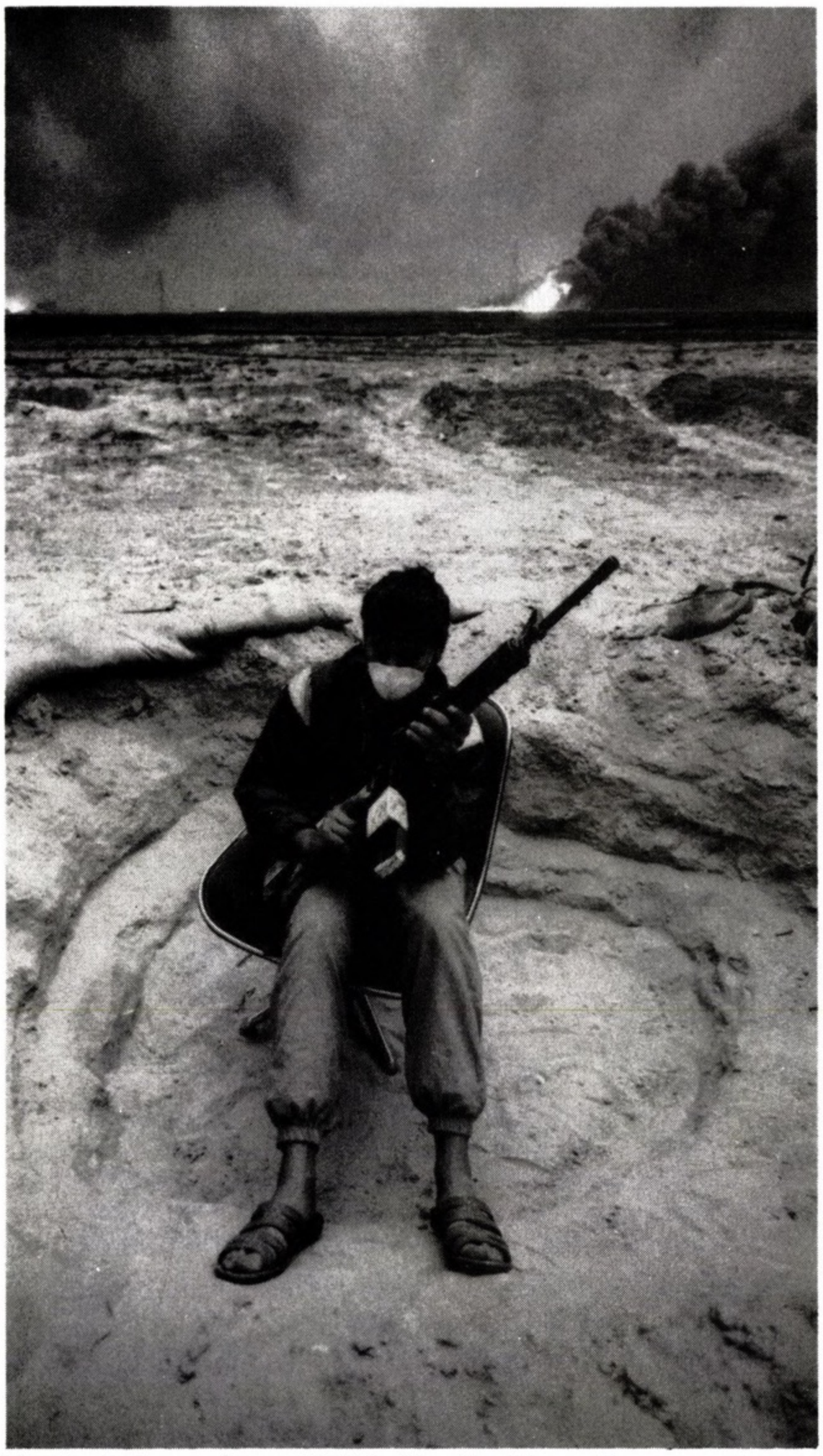


Photo : Peter Jordan/Network

The beginning or the end? 600 oil wells ablaze. Damage: unknown.

environment like they do now?'

'They were too busy developing technology to kill people and poison the earth.'

'In 1991 government officials in several countries exploited the fear, insecurity and censorship of information fostered by the war to implement policies which might never have passed public scrutiny just one year previously. The US administration proposed opening Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil exploration and reviving the moribund US nuclear power industry. And the military was exempted from the law requiring that the environmental impact of all new activities be assessed. In Canada a massive hydroelectric dam project in James Bay was pushed ahead – although it would displace thousands of native Cree and Inuit people and upset the ecological balance of the entire northern wilderness.

'What had happened to the peace – and the green – movements at this time you may ask.'

'What did happen?'

'Shut up and you'll find out.'

'Well, despite widespread demonstrations of opposition to war, the peace movement did not have much impact. Opposition was often quite scattered and reactive, while the governments and military were unusually successful at manipulating the terms of debate. The environmental movement was also plagued by a piecemeal, issue-by-issue approach. The radical alternatives that were clearly necessary often got lost in a mire of technical policy debates.

'In next week's programme we will be looking at ...'

'Damn!'

'What's the matter?' says grandmother Sarah, who has just drifted in.

'I want to know what happened next,' Tammy replies.

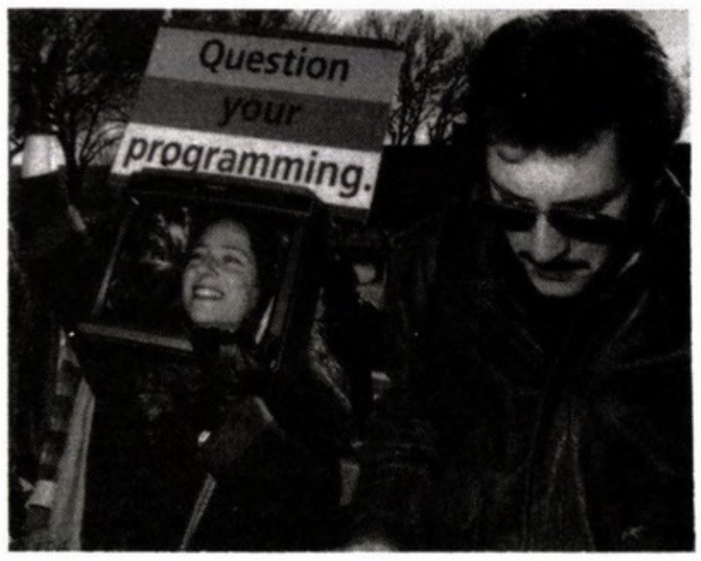
Sarah can't quite make out her green grandchildren, with all their permaculture eco-talk and mania for measuring acid rain. At their age the only acid she was into was House.

Tommy turns to her: 'When did soldiers stop killing people and start defending the environment?'

'Phew! I guess it started really happening round about the time of the Great Famine after the Gulf war. The Famine affected everyone, in some way. The politicians tried to pretend it wasn't anything to do with militarism and social injustice. But it had become so obvious that they were lying. That's when people got into their heads that real 'security' was about bread, not guns. It took a while though ... But hang on, didn't I tell you to go to bed?' □

Brian Tokar is the author of *The Green Alternative: Creating an Ecological Future (R & E Miles, 1987)*, which will soon be available in a revised edition. Gayle Hardy is a short story writer.

ACTION



WORTH CONTACTING

There are many groups. We have space to list but a few.

AOTEAROA (NZ): New Zealand Nuclear-free Peacemaking Association, PO Box 18541 Christchurch. **Peace Researcher**, PO Box 2 Lincoln University, Canterbury.

AUSTRALIA: Campaign Against the Arms Trade, Peter Jones (Jo Valentine Green Senator), Parliament House, Canberra Act 2600. Tel: (06) 2773790. **Greenpeace**, 37 Nicholson Rd, Balmain, 2041. Tel: (02) 555 7044. **Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific**, PO Box 489 Petersham. Tel: (02) 550 9967. **Anti-bases Action Committee**, 56 Forster St, Surry Hills 2010. Tel: (02) 281 8390.

CANADA: Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade, 489, Metcalf St, Ottawa K15 3N7. Tel: (613) 231 3076. **Project Ploughshares**, National Office, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G6. Tel: (519) 888 6541. **World Federalists of Canada,** 145 Spruce St. Ste 207, Ottawa, Ont. KIR 6P1. Tel: (613) 232 0647.

UK: Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT), 11, Goodwin Street, Finsbury Park, London N4 3HQ. Tel: (071) 281 0297. **Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)**, 162 Holloway Road, London N7 8DQ. Tel: (071) 700 2393. **Peace Pledge Union**, 6 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H ODX. Tel: (071) 387 5501. **Friends of the Earth**, 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ. Tel: (071) 490 1555.

US: The National Commission for Economic Conversion and Disarmament, Suite 9, 1801 Eighteenth Street, NW, Washington DC 20009. Tel: (202) 462 0091. **Mobilization for Survival**, 45 John Street, Ste 811, New York, NY 10038. Tel: (212) 385 2222. **Sane/Freeze: Campaign for Global Security**, 1819 H St. W, Ste 640, Washington DC 20006. Tel: (202) 862 9740.

INTERNATIONAL: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Pipers Vag 28, S-171 73 Solna, Sweden. Tel: (46) 8655 9700.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The arms trade is a human rights issue worth raising in such groups.

Arms exports to Indonesia help the brutal dictatorship of General Suharto. Contact: **TAPOL**, The Indonesian Human Rights Campaign, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8HW, UK. Tel: (081) 771 2904.

PARLIAMENTARY ACTION

- **Put pressure on politicians** to demand a national register of arms exports. This will remove secrecy, making control easier.
- **Demand that your government** close down departments for exporting arms.

WORTH CHOOSING

Consuming ethically is one way of registering protest – or support. If you have a pension fund make sure it is an ethical one. You can boycott companies with military connections more effectively if you write to the company explaining the reason for your choice.

NO MILITARY CONNECTION:
Volkswagen, Audi and Seat – cars.
Electrolux, Hoover, Sharp, Matsushita, JVC, National, Technics, Panasonic – household and electrical goods.
Sony, Aiwa, Columbia, CBS, Warner, Amstrad – recorded music, videos, music systems, computers.
Virgin, Thomson – recorded music, travel (Brands: Virgin, Siren, Horizon, Lunn Poly).

SOME MILITARY SALES ($10-$50 million)
Peugeot, Renault – cars.
Tate & Lyle – sugar, syrup.
Hanson Trust – (Brands: Players, Castella, Woodbines cigars and cigarettes, and EverReady batteries).
E.I. du Pont Nemours – fuel (Brands: Jet, Conoco), textiles (Brands: Lycra and Orlon).
Hitachi – music systems.
Coats Viyella – (Textiles: Chartex, Dorma, Vantona, and Tactel).
Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) – medicines

LARGE MILITARY SALES (over $50 million)
Ford, General Motors, British Aerospace (Rover), Nissan, Fiat – cars.
BP (British Petroleum), Esso (Exxon), Mobil, Shell, Texaco – fuel.
Green Force (BP): household cleaners.
Philips, General Electric Company, Toshiba, Thorn EMI: recorded music (Brands: Island, Polygram, A&M, Chrysalis, Capitol EMI), videos, electrical and household appliances (Brands: Creda, Hotpoint, Redring).

This information comes from *Changing Corporate Values, by R Adams, J Carruthers and Sean Hamil which can be obtained from* New Consumer at 52, Elswick Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE4 6JH.

WORTH READING

The following books are relevant in the post-Cold War world.

Death on Delivery *(Campaign Against the Arms Trade, 1989)* is probably the best and most readable book on how the arms trade affects the Third World. **The Demilitarized Society** by Seymour Melman *(Spokesman, 1988)* argues the economic case for conversion simply and persuasively. For a fresh feminist perspective Cynthia Enloe's **Bananas Beaches and Bases** is highly recommended *(Pandora, 1989)*. There are also interesting pieces in a new international collection **Reader in Peace Studies**, edited by Paul Snoker *(Pergamon Press, 1990)*. For a look inside the shady world of the arms-makers and dealers Anthony Sampson's **The Arms Bazaar** *(Coronet, 1977)* is a must; an updated version is in preparation. **Trading in Death** by James Adams is in a similar vein, but stronger on anecdote and intrigue than politics. The best reference books are the **SIPRI Yearbook 1991** *(Stockholm International Institute for Peace Studies, Oxford 1991);* and **Military and Social Expenditures 1990/1991** by Ruth Leger Sivard *(World Priorities, 1991)*. This edition is due out soon.

SLAVERY

The price of a child

Human trade in Sudan

AN Anti-Slavery Society investigator pointed to a seven-year-old boy, offered to buy him and made it clear he would be taken abroad. There was no problem.

The attempted purchase of the boy – the Society of course did not go through with the sale – was conducted quite without secrecy at Safaha, a crossing point on the Bahr el Arab, which is a tributary of the White Nile. But the Bahr el Arab is more than that. It is roughly the line that divides Sudan in two. To the north are Arabs, Islam, the desert, Khartoum and political power; to the south are black Africans, Christianity, animism, unexploited oil, vegetation and rainforest.

Traditionally the Arabs have enslaved the southerners. Today the pattern is repeating itself. The Arab communities, the Rizeigat and Misseiraya, are predominantly the slavers and the black Dinka people, the largest ethnic group in the south, are usually the slaves.

By the end of 1987 several cases of enslavement had come to light but the Khartoum authorities still insisted that there was no slavery problem. The then government even refused to believe one of its own members, Aldo Ajou Deng, when he announced that 400 children had been taken into slavery from his own village south of the Bahr el Arab.

Sudan's second civil war since Independence in 1956 broke out in July 1983. It is still going on. Armed bands, drawn mainly from the Rizeigat and Misseiraya Arabs, operate in the border zones between their lands and Dinka territory. They swoop on Dinka villages, particularly when the men are away, and drive off the cattle. If the men are around they are shot. They also take the opportunity to enslave the children and younger women.

In early 1987 in a village near the important northern town of Muglad an auction of children was held: boys fetched between $200 and $300. But if prices are any guide, the free market then produced a surplus of slaves. At the beginning of 1988 prices of children averaged $100; by March that had halved to $50 and then fell further to $20. You could buy six or seven child slaves for the price of one automatic weapon.

Governments have consistently denied that slavery has re-emerged in Sudan and downplayed the significance of the militias. But a former Regional Minister of Health, Southern Region of Sudan, Dr Z Bol Deng, recently said in London: 'The Government in Khartoum has decided on a policy of extermination of whole tribes in some parts of the country, beginning with the Dinka'. From stories told by ex-slaves in Khartoum, a figure of up to 7,000 has emerged for the number of people enslaved.

Alan Whittaker/Anti-Slavery Society

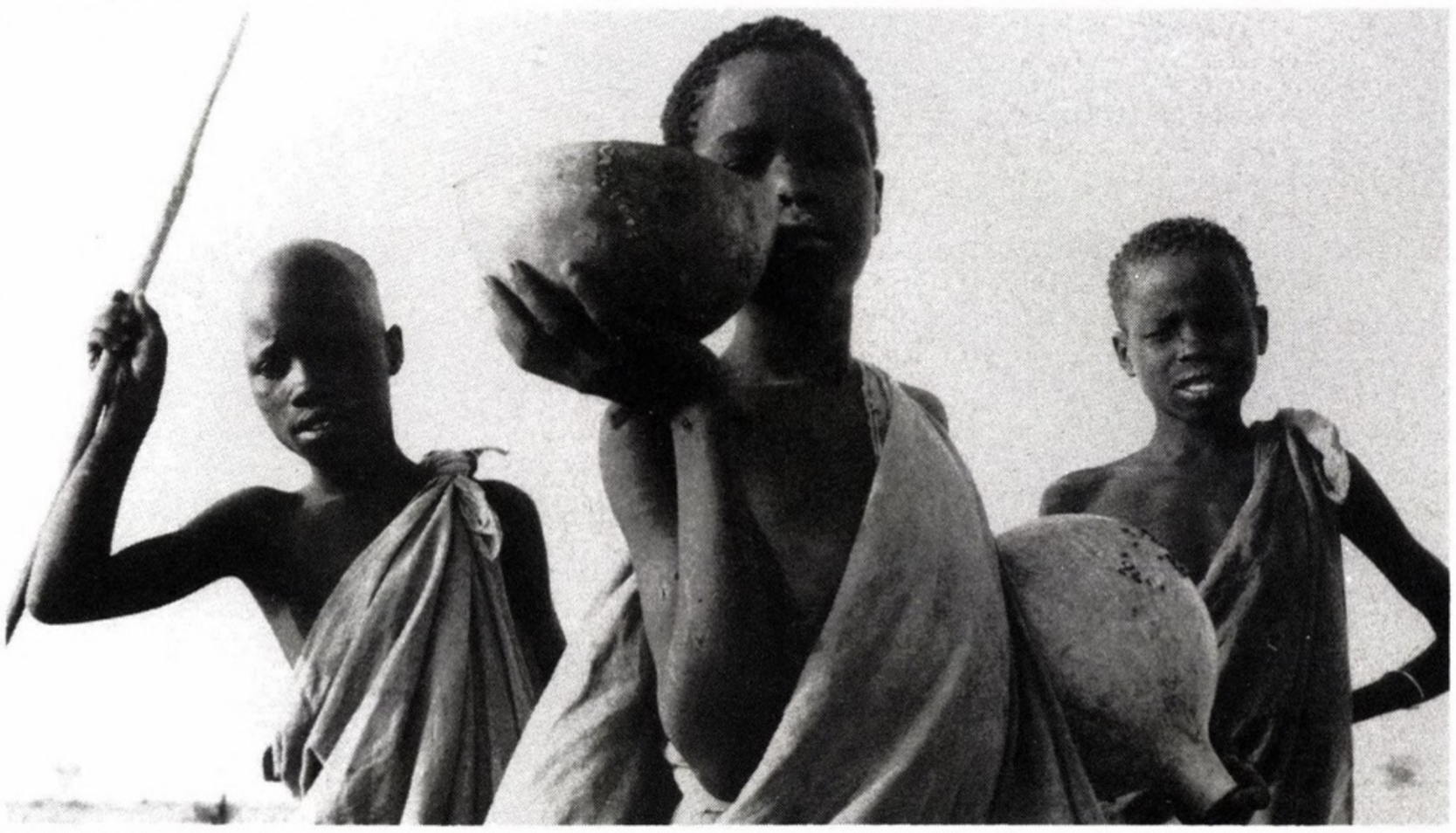


Photo : Werner Gartung

Dinka distress: the people of southern Sudan are threatened by famine, civil war and slavery.

NICARAGUA

Relapse

Health standards fall

THE defeat of the Sandinista government in the Nicaraguan elections a year ago took everyone, including the successful coalition of Violeta Chamorro, by surprise. According to Dr Lionel Arguello, director of the Managua-based Center for Research and Social Development (CEPS) the result has been confusion and a reversal of many of the achievements of the Sandinista government, particularly in the field of preventive health care.

When the Sandinistas came to power in 1979 there were over 100 polio cases in Nicaragua every year: since 1981 there have been no more cases. Mass immunization campaigns against other preventable diseases such as measles, malaria and dengue fever had their effect. Together with an emphasis on basic nutrition for children and the improvement of public hygiene in the towns, these simple measures brought down the infant mortality rate in Nicaragua from 124 per 1,000 live births in 1977 (one of the better pre-revolution years) to 61 in 1986 – a reduction of more than a half.

All this was achieved despite the US trade blockade which made essential drugs hard to find – Nicaragua had to buy them at high prices in Panama. It was achieved, too, at a time when the average income of Nicaraguans was actually falling, due largely to the costs of the war with the *contra* guerillas.

Official figures show that the infant mortality rate has now risen again, to 72 per 1,000 live births in 1990. Last year, too, measles affected 17,000 people and killed 700 of them – the worst outbreak in Nicaraguan history. Essential drugs are no longer free, so families have to choose between buying them and getting enough to eat. This discourages people from using health care facilities, as does a reversion to hierarchical management chains, in which there is much less room for individual or collective initiative and responsibility.

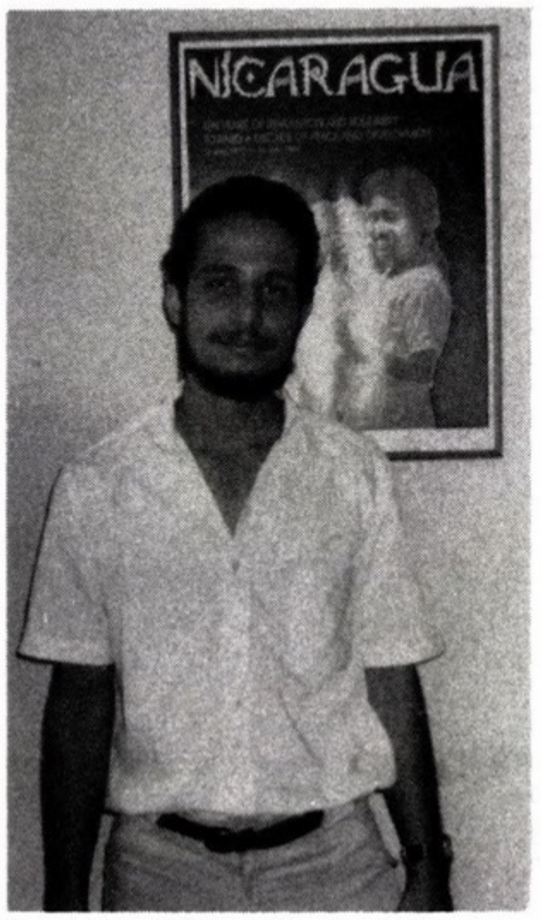


Photo : NHF

Dr. Lionel Arguello is sanguine.

Dr Arguello believes that the Nicaraguan people were sold something of a 'mirage' at last year's elections – the idea that with the end of the war and of the economic blockade Nicaragua's woes would be resolved. But he is surprisingly sanguine about the future and willing to co-operate with the Chamorro government. The slogan of 'popular participation' under the Sandinistas may have been changed to 'social mobilization' under Chamorro, but the importance of the active involvement of people in their own health care, particularly in a poor country like Nicaragua, seems to him to be beyond dispute.

David Ransom

For further information contact Nicaragua Health Fund, All Saints House, 83 Margaret Street, London W1N 7HB. Tel (71) 580 4292 Fax (71) 436 1129

AIDS

Spreading

African death toll rises

HUNDREDS of thousands of people with AIDS in Uganda will die in the 1990s unless the disease can be cured or halted, according to the World Heath Organization (WHO). And it is a similar picture in other African countries.

WHO estimates that last year alone saw 60,000 new AIDS cases in Uganda. Between 1988 and 1989 an estimated 170,000 had died. After a shaky start, the Ugandan media is now being used extensively to publicize the Government's anti-AIDS campaign.

Apart from the traditional opposition of the Roman Catholic Church to the use of contraceptives, there is the deeper cultural attitude that regards the condom as the symbol of promiscuity. It is virtually impossible to buy condoms over the counter in pharmacies.

In Tanzania over 40,000 people now have full-blown AIDS and one medical centre in Dar es Salaam has recorded that over 12 per cent of all patients admitted are suffering from it.

In Bukoba, on the shores of Lake Victoria, a third of the 47,000 population are HIV-positive, and the local authorities are finding it hard to cope. In the two years up to 1989, the Town Council had buried the unclaimed bodies of 1,272 people who had died of AIDS.

But despite government support, AIDS warning posters put up in bars and guest houses are usually torn down because owners fear customers may blacklist their establishment as an AIDS zone.

South Africa, too, is now facing up to its AIDS problem. Johannesburg's director of community health, Nicky Padayachee, estimates that between 317,000 and 446,000 black South Africans will be HIV-positive by the end of this year. About 1,000 white people are thought to be infected. Apartheid has played a key role in the AIDS epidemic by promoting migrant labour which separates families for long periods, encouraging casual sex.

Nizar Visram, Edward Lwanga/Newslink Africa
Richard Tebere/Gemini
Sue Armstrong/New Scientist

ENTERTAINMENT

First tango

Cult singer commemorated

THE tango is a fast, sensual and 'disreputable' Argentinian dance. It grew out of Spanish roots, borrowing on the way from Cuba's equally stylized *habanero* dance. About now – no one is quite sure of the exact date – is the 100th anniversary of the legendary idol of the tango, Carlos Gardel, who died in a mysterious Colombian plane crash 55 years ago. Gardel was a cult figure. and recently his followers descended on Mexico for a World Gardeliano Congress.

They argued about his birthdate and place (he said only that he 'was born in Buenos Aires at the age of two and a half'), the authenticity of the 679 singles released under his name, his love life (he never married), his political views and the clouded circumstances of his death. A statue was unveiled, the Carlos Gardel Handicap horse race was run and there were nightly exhibitions of the melodramatic dance the suave Argentinean made famous.

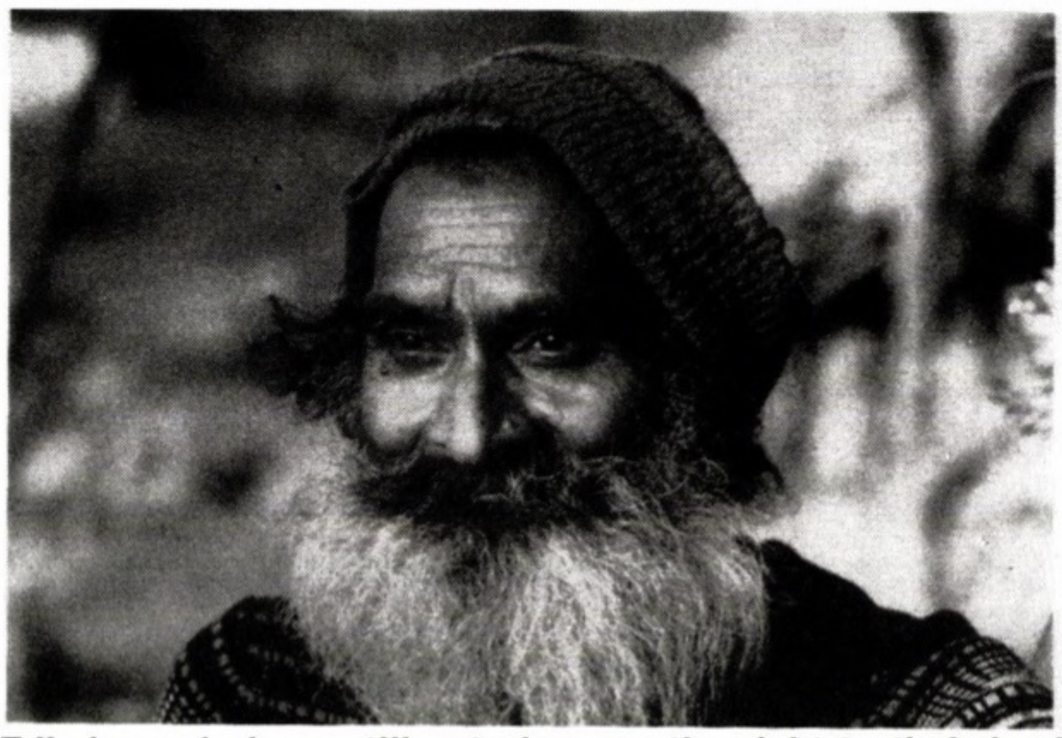
Gardel sold newspapers in brothels and sang for coins to help his mother make ends meet. His ingratiating smile and sweet, melancholic voice captivated the immigrant population. By the 1920s Gardel and the tango had achieved middle-class respectability on the stage and in the studios of a burgeoning Argentinian recording industry. Internationally, Maurice Chevalier and Charlie Chaplin became ardent fans and Bing Crosby once said that he had never heard a lovelier voice.

The circumstances of his death remain hotly contested. Some blamed an overloaded aircraft. Others suggested a gun battle with the co-pilot. Thousands of Medellin citizens immediately descended on the tiny airfield where the crash occurred. Mobs greeted his coffin as it made stops in New York and Rio. The largest crowds ever to gather in Buenos Aires followed the cortège to Chacarita cemetary. Today fresh daisies are still laid on the tomb each morning and a newly-lit cigarette placed between the fingers of the bronze image that tops the grave.

Illustration : Gemini

The Mexico City conference was attended by 100 fast-talking, chain-smoking Gardel fanatics. Many Argentinian exiles had tears in their eyes. Whether they were the result of nostalgia or the Mexican capital's record-breaking winter pollution was, like Carlos Gardel himself, shrouded in mystery.

John Ross/Gemini



Tribal people have still not given up the right to their land.

Photo : P H Body/Survival International

INDIA

Dammed

Narmada protests continue

PROPOSALS for a 3,000-dam complex on the Narmada river, which will submerge some 250 villages and 400 square kilometres of land, continue to meet fierce resistance.

Twelve people were arrested recently for surrounding the chairman of the construction company, Narmada Nigam Ltd. On Christmas Day 1990 over 5,000 people set off to march the length of the river. The march was brought to an abrupt halt by police. Some of the marchers went on a lengthy hunger strike and many others were arrested.

The dams have become the focus for a growing environmental movement in India and highlighted the right of India's tribal people to land where they have lived for generations. Some 60,000 tribal people are under threat from the dams.

On 9 April this year 250 tribal people were arrested for protesting against the construction of another dam, the Icha, part of the Subarnarekha Project in Bihar, east India. The dam will displace nearly 30,000 people in 61 villages, a majority of them belonging to the Ho tribe.

Incredibly enough, the World Bank continues to fund these projects, despite the withdrawal of Japanese funding from the Narmada project in May 1990. The Bank's own environmental conditions have not been met by the Indian Government.

The Narmada dams are billed as a cure for drought in western India. But many of the drought-prone areas will get little or no water. Most of the benefits will not go to the people affected by the project, but to industrial cities and, of course, the construction companies. Studies have shown that small dams and wells would be a far more effective means of providing water for the local population.

Actress Julie Christie, touring India last December, said: 'Tribal people are being coerced, protesters are being violently repressed. Tribal people will be displaced to alien environments. The World Bank's financing of the vast project reveals the emptiness of their promises to finance only environmentally responsible projects.'

Survival International

For information, contact Survival International, 310 Edgeware Road, London W2 1DY. Tel (71) 723 5535

BRIEFLY . . .

THE PHILIPPINES

Bedtime story

Did President Corazon Aquino hide under her Malacanang Palace bed during the August 1987 coup attempt? She says she didn't. And to prove it, she took the unprecedented step of going to court on 11 February against *Philippine Star* columnist Luis Beltran. For he wrote that this was her hiding place. To back up her denial, Cory Aquino explained to a packed courtroom that there is not enough room beneath her boudoir's box-like bed to slip under.

'This particular statement gives the impression that the commander-in-chief of the armed forces is a coward,' she told the court in two-and-a-half hours of testimony which was carried live on television and radio.

'I was very angry because this was a blatant lie and I want the court to know.' Beltran could face imprisonment if found guilty of libelling the President.

Other Philippines commentators have been trying to help their colleague by pointing out that such hiding places are not so shameful. After all, they say, the British Prime Minister John Major and his cabinet ministers all dived under the cabinet table when the Irish Republican Army lobbed mortar shells at No 10 Downing Street.

Far Eastern Economic Review, Vol 151, No 8, 1991.

INFANT FORMULA

Mother's milk

An antibiotic which is so powerful that within an hour it kills bacteria that cause food poisoning has been discovered in human milk. The new antibiotic, named 'lactofelicine' by the Japanese team that developed it, is a derivative of lactofeline, which makes up about 70 per cent of the protein in a mother's first milk. It is also effective against diarrhoea, which caused four million infant deaths in developing countries last year, but leaves beneficial bacteria unharmed.

This miraculous antibiotic of nature is absent from commercial infant formulas promoted so heavily in the West and the Third World.

New Scientist, No 1765, 1991.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Candy, not Dandy

At the sixty-fifth annual tribal parade and rodeo (1991) on the White Mountain Apache reservation in Arizona, corporate superheroes were throwing candy at kids. One man was dressed as Spuds MacKenzie, the party animal of Budweiser's TV ads, another as Superman. The candy they threw was packaged as perfect replicas of Budweiser beer cans.

Never mind that more than half of adult American Indians abuse alcohol and are four times as likely to die from it as other Americans. Or that fetal alcohol syndrome is a plague on many reservations. Or that up to 40 per cent of Native American Indian teenagers abuse alcohol or that 12 per cent of Indian children are drinking booze regularly by their ninth birthday.

Marketing strategists defend their freedom to advertise through these candy look alikes.

Mother Jones, Vol 16, No 3, 1991.

TOBACCO

500,000,000,000 plus...

That is the number of cigarettes manufactured last year by British American Tobacco and other subsidiaries of the transnational conglomerate, BAT Industries plc. This amounts to a hundred BAT cigarettes for every person on the planet, from the new-born baby to those about to die; even so BAT claim no more than 10.3 per cent of the world market, from which they made a record trading profit of £966 million.

The company is looking forward to growth in their existing markets in the Far East and also to entering the hitherto closed markets of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. BAT's chairman, Sir Patrick Sheehy, says, 'These are the most exciting times I have seen in the tabacco industry in the last forty years.'

From British American Tobacco Annual Report, 1991.

GLOBAL POLICE-PERSON

Object lessons, anyone?

The punishing response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait was a demonstration to North Korea's Kim Il Sung of what an attack on South Korea would bring, says General RisCassi commander of the 43,000 strong US forces in South Korea.

RisCassi remarked that the swiftness with which the US reacted in the Middle East, the speed with which a multinational coalition was formed and the ability of the US and South Korea to conduct the large Team Spirit military exercise in South Korea during the Gulf war were object lessons for the Korean peninsula.

New World Order

Far Eastern Economic Review, Vol. 151, No 18 1991.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Munch

German scientists are breeding artificial bacteria to degrade the plastic body of the notorious smoke-spewing Trabant, the East German car that carried thousands to West Germany in 1989. Now more and more of these cars are found being abandoned. Incinerating the wrecks would release toxic fumes. So the new microbes are reported to be used to reduce the plastic to about two per cent of its original weight. Here is biotechnology in action.

World Press Review, Vol 38, No 5, 1991.

LIBERIA

Wasteland

The news from Monrovia after the end of several weeks of civil war in Liberia is grim. There is no public transport or postal service, no telephones or banks. Two thirds of the population is without safe drinking water. Food distributed by international aid groups is scarce. Even dogs, cats and zoo animals have been eaten. The Red Cross has estimated the number of people missing at one million and the count of homeless children at 6,000.

World Press Review, Vol 38, No 5, 1991.

"endquote"

'Unless the penguin and the poor evoke from us equal concern, conservation will be a lost cause. There can be no common future without a better common present. Development which is not equitable is not sustainable in the long term.'

Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, outgoing President of World Conservation Union.

Haefeli/Punch/London

"Look, don't judge me by the clothes I wear, the car I drive, the books I read, the food I eat, the music I like, the friends I see, the money I earn, the place I live, the job I have, the things I say, or the way I act. OK?"

Let them eat nothing

Duncan Smith on the human cost of economic orthodoxy – and the search for an alternative.

IN 1729 Jonathan Swift published his most savage satire against oppression in Ireland in *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from being a Burden to their Parents and to the Country*. The proposal was to fatten the children before eating them. It is hard to imagine where his scorching anger would have led him had he lived to experience the 'Great Hunger' which gripped Ireland from 1845-49.

Before the famine broke out there was horrifying poverty. The census of 1841 showed that half the rural population lived in 'windowless mud cabins of a single room' and subsisted almost entirely on potatoes. Then in the autumn of 1845 the potato crop was wiped out by disease.

England was, at this time, ruled by politicians and economists with a fanatical belief in Free Trade and laissez-faire. A disaster was clearly foreseen but after a miserly distribution of Indian Corn and soup it was concluded by the Whig Government that the 'right course was to do nothing for Ireland and to leave things to the operation of natural causes'.

Consequently racketeers made profits and the export of food from Ireland continued because the starving had no money with which to buy it. Nearly two million desperate people fled the country to escape starvation. No-one knows how many starved to death but scores of thousands died, uncounted, in their cabins, in ditches and by the roadside.

Laissez-faire economics in action during the 1847 potato famine. Plus ça change?

Shortly afterwards Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol College, Oxford, wrote 'I have always felt a certain horror of political economists since I heard one say that he feared that the famine of 1848 in Ireland would not kill more than a million and that would be scarcely enough to do much good'.

This is a terrible story but we have no cause to be self-righteous. Millions are now starving in Africa and elsewhere at a time when we have just squandered billions of dollars in a battle to control an oilfield. It is generally assumed that though nations may form alliances for particular purposes it is normal for them to compete ruthlessly in the economic sphere and that laissez-faire is, like the weather, a natural phenomenon beyond human control.

In fact, our economic system is human-made. It was formulated by Adam Smith and his successors only two centuries ago. Before then most economic systems took some account of human relationships. For example, usury was a crime in the eyes of the Church until the sixteenth century. But since the Industrial Revolution competition, private enterprise and the worship of growth have become a quasi-religion. The only major attempt – in the Communist countries – to establish a different system has foundered on the rock of human nature.

This shows that people are more than pawns and that a system based on rigid authoritarianism cannot last. But it does not mean – as some on the Right would like it to mean – that we are 'at the end of history', that the triumph of Mammon is complete. Nature, for a start, is hitting back after years of disregard and abuse during the rush to industrialism. Air and water pollution are rampant. The 'greenhouse effect' and the depletion of the ozone layer are at last being taken seriously. Unregulated and indefinite growth based on finite resources is clearly a nonsense and unless we can use these more economically and equitably Gulf-type wars over water, energy and raw materials will proliferate.

Equally important is the moral pollution caused by the exaltation of greed, selfishness and acquisitiveness implicit in the present system. Economists regard people as factors of production rather than as human souls, profit takes precedence over needs and a fifth of humanity lives in abject poverty because they have no purchasing power.

Even in the so-called 'developed' countries there are huge disparities of wealth. Resources, both nationally and internationally, have been steadily transferred from the poor to the rich. Such gross injustice inevitably leads to an increase in crime, fraud, drug-taking, guerilla-warfare, envy and despair.

Worldwide there is a great hunger for change – for some form of new age which gives people moral values that will give their lives real satisfaction. Such spiritual yearnings, however, are liable to fade like morning mist unless they are supported by a system of economics which embodies their aspirations. And to do that means you have to challenge orthodox economics head on.

The person who did so most effectively was Fritz Schumacher. It was largely his inspiration which, when the Economic Summit met in London in 1984, led a group of admirers to organize The Other Alternative Summit (TOES) to challenge orthodox thinking. This led to the formation of the New Economic Foundation, a charity whose mission is to 'develop a new economics that will change the economy to one that is sustainable, socially just and with a high quality of life for all'. An enormous task but one which is beginning to show results.

The Other Economic Summit is this year back in London from July 15-16, 'shadowing' the official Economic Summit. Leading activists from the Third World and from Europe will tackle subjects ranging from the money system to 'greening' management to international trade.

The New Economics may not be getting the mainstream media coverage it deserves but it has done much to create pathways that avoid the errors of both communism and capitalism. It is naturally open – and of interest – to everyone who is hungry for change.

Duncan Smith is a member of the New Economics Foundation. The Other Economic Summit 1991 is being held at the Central Hall, Westminster, London, July 15-16. For details phone 071 377 5720.

Keffiyeh chic: Charlie Sheen's Lebanese undercover in *Navy Seals*.

FILM

Navy Seals

directed by Lewis Teague

One of several US war films which have had their overseas release dates delayed by the Gulf war, **Navy Seals** is a recruiting poster for the US Navy's elite commando teams. Charlie Sheen and Michael Biehn lead the squad through the customary round of hard-playing good times and noisy action sequences, all set to pop music.

At first sight the film would appear to be no different in mentality and structure from *Top Gun* or the average Chuck Norris Missing-In-Action movie, but what makes **Navy Seals** of some passing interest is the strangely inhibited nature of its plotting. An Arab faction in the Lebanon have managed to get hold of some US-made Stinger ground-to-air portable missiles – 'the perfect terrorist weapon'. So, with the help of Lebanese-American journalist Joanne Whalley-Kilmer (also representing the inevitable romantic interest), the Seals have to go in and destroy them.

It's an absolute certainty that the scriptwriters did not intend their film to be a parable about the international arms trade and its effects in Iraq, but we can't help but see it that way now. The obvious task for these movie fantasy commandos would have been to rescue hostages from the Lebanon but given the plight of the real hostages that would have been in such extreme bad taste as to alienate the audience.

So all they're left with is a mission to destroy weapons of US manufacture which have irresponsibly been allowed to fall into the wrong hands. It's a curiously futile enterprise that no amount of wisecracks and hi-tech gunplay can disguise: nothing is solved except the problem the Americans have created for themselves. At the same time, though, the film does seem to be wholly at one with the Sheen character's rabid xenophobia: 'We go in there, we hit 'em, we forget 'em!'

It's the gist of the Gulf war replayed in a mere 113 minutes. Navy Seals may be garbage – but it's very revealing garbage.

Politics ☆
Entertainment ☆

La Captive du Désert

directed by Raymond Depardon

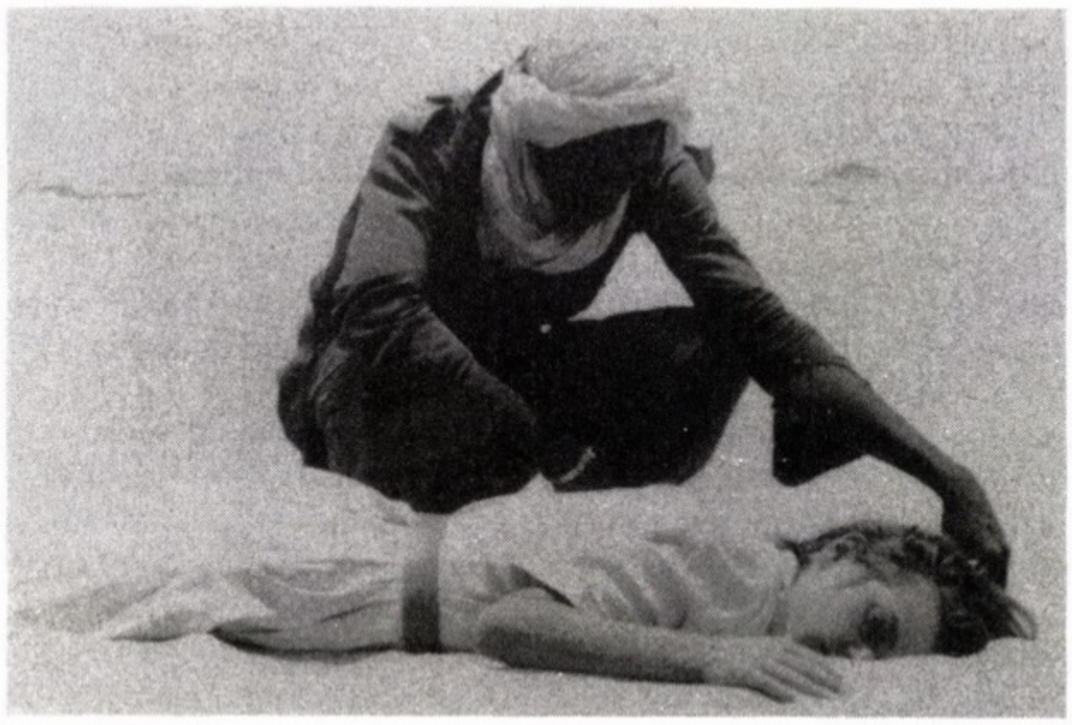
In 1975 a young French woman was kidnapped by rebels in Chad and held prisoner in the desert for over a year. Raymond Depardon, a photo-journalist with the Gamma and Magnum agencies, covered the story at the time. Now, 15 years later, he has used it as the basis for this extraordinary film.

Depardon doesn't establish what the rebels are fighting for, or how the woman, simply identified as The Prisoner, is captured. The film opens with a long, long take of a caravan tramping through the desert. Lagging far behind it come the woman and her guard. This shot sets the tone for the rest of the film. There's a minimum of dialogue and no violence; the prisoner makes no contact with her captors beyond teaching some children a song. Instead the film focuses on her daily struggle to survive and escape, both hinging on her need for water. The extended takes and awesome desert landscapes have a hypnotic effect so that the audience comes to share her experience that time has lost its meaning.

In its attention to the tiny, mechanical details of survival and the overall austerity of its style, **La Captive du Désert** recalls Bresson's *A Man Escaped*. But whereas the hero of that film was locked in a tiny cell, the woman, mesmerizingly played by Sandrine Bonnaire, is imprisoned in a vast expanse, the very size of which prevents her from running away. Totally alone in a crowded caravan, confined in a limitless space, she turns in on herself, stripping away the baggage of her old identity until she can focus exclusively on her present actions.

Then, suddenly she is released. A guerilla explains to her that, simply by having lived with them, she can now bear witness to the hardship of the desert people. And it's at this point you realize that's exactly what the film, in its unobtrusive way, has been doing. This is one of those rare, remarkable films that, refusing to ram explicit emotions or politics down the audience's throat, manages to evoke them all the more powerfully and authentically.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆



Lost in limitless space, Sandrine Bonnaire is La Captive du Désert.

MUSIC

Night Ride Home

by Joni Mitchell

The one-time queen of the 'Me Generation' troubadours, Joni Mitchell has over the last few years taken a path markedly different from her West Coast-based contemporaries. Always the most approachable of musicians, even when straying into avant-gardism, she has since the mid-1970s continued to draw on styles apparently alien to her coffee-house folk tradition – electronics, jazz, fusion, scat, Latin – and to talk equally persuasively about herself and the world around her.

On her classic 1975 LP *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* she was arguably the first Western artist to use African drumming as more than flavouring, creating an extended metaphor of America-as-jungle that made the album one of the most complete musical commentaries on American living.

While emulators like Suzanne Vega have appropriated elements of her style – the preciousness but not the substance – Mitchell has of late reverted to an older purity. **Night Ride Home** sounds closer to folk than anything she's done for years and represents a healthy step back from the overwrought studio gimcrackery she indulged in on 1988's *Chalk Mark in a Rain Storm*. It also represents a step back from political subject-matter. The rather obvious polemic of her *Dog Eat Dog* LP and *Chalk Mark*'s clumsy American Indian metaphors have been superseded by a return to sexual politics.

Mitchell is still popular music's most persuasive articulator of female desire – notably on *The Only Joy in Town*, a blithe vignette of touristic passion, and on *Ray's Dad's Cadillac*, in which she jokily rehearses and then dismantles the role of the high-school bimbo. *Come In From the Cold* is a more extensive commentary on sex and her 1960s generation, while *Cherokee Louise* touches almost casually on child abuse and inner-city desolation.

Night Ride Home is Mitchell's most confident LP for some time, and welcome reassurance that the old acoustic school can still produce music that, however comfortable it may sound, is fundamentally at odds with the corporate sound of American taste.

Politics ☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

BOOKS

Travel Guides

Independent travelling in the Third World has become so common now that a publishing industry has grown up around it. The travel itself was born of cheap air travel and the relaxed social mores and work patterns of the post-1960s West. But it has also certainly been much helped by the existence of the 'alternative guide book'.

Since the mid-1970s this territory has been dominated by the **Lonely Planet** series of *Travel Survival Kits*. Kicked off by the original success of *South-East Asia On A Shoestring* (still going in its umpteenth edition), founders Tony and Maureen Wheeler hit on a winning formula which has since been applied to the entire Third World.

The formula is essentially a distillation in print of the travellers' information exchange that you will find going on informally in young Westerners' haunts in most cities of the Third World. What's worth seeing? Where's worth staying? What's the cheapest way of doing it? The questions become monotonous in their inevitability – and the obsession with spending as little money as humanly possible often becomes ridiculous.

But the **Lonely Planet** guides work because they deliver the information people want rather than what they ought to want. Given their success it is no surprise that competitors have arisen to challenge them. The burgeoning series of **Rough Guides** (published by Harrap Columbus) is perhaps the most serious of these.

Both have recently published a guide to Nepal which provide a point of comparison, though it is actually difficult to choose between them: both are excellent. They both make a reasonable stab at sketching out the political and developmental context (the **Rough Guide** even runs a short story from the **NI**). The **Rough Guide**'s central section is better designed; its other two sections worse designed.

The **Lonely Planet**'s few pages of colour photos make it more attractive and are indicative of the commercial success of the series – but are they an error? You're less inclined to bash about a colour book on the road, which is why no-one is ever seen travelling with the miraculously colourful **Insight** guides (from Apa Publications, whose 'city guide' to Kathmandu is also just out) – they either leave that at home or else buy it when they get back.

Both series are reliable – it's comforting to know what standards you can expect when you land in a new country with them as your most useful friend. But they lose something by being part of a formula too. The greatest travel guides of all are often those which are totally individual, infused with the idiosyncratic personality of the author. Which is why if you ever visit Indonesia, the **Lonely Planet** book on it is not the one to buy – go instead for Bill Dalton's marvellous **Indonesia Handbook** (Moon Publications), now in its fourth edition.

STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Reviews editor: Chris Brazier

CLASSIC

The Volunteers

... being the book that put thinking into the thriller

'THRILLER' on a bookflap has seldom made me reach for my wallet. Hardly any of the very few thrillers I've read have thrilled me in the slightest: the word usually provokes in me a notion of wooden (always male) leading characters speaking ridiculously inappropriate dialogue in unlikely locations (these being as globally varied as possible) in an ultimately successful attempt to unravel the threads of a ludicrously complicated conspiracy to do with drugs, terrorism, robbery, vice or high finance. There is the occasional female character, usually a ready provider of sex for the hero. Think of an Ian Fleming or an Alistair Maclean novel, and add laptop computers: that's my idea of a contemporary thriller.

I'd thus probably never have read **The Volunteers** ('a compelling thriller', according to the publisher's blurb) if it hadn't been written by Raymond Williams. I knew him as perhaps the finest socialist writer on politics and culture that Britain has produced this century, but he'd also written about half a dozen novels before his death in 1987. I'd read three of these and hadn't liked any of them. Nobody's ever written a halfway-decent novel in which the hero/ine was an academic, and these were no exception. I therefore picked up **The Volunteers** out of duty rather than expectation. I was more than pleasantly surprised.

Think of it as a British *All The President's Men*, only much more politically astute. Lewis Redfern, a London-based news reporter for Insatel, a global satellite TV conglomerate, is reporting on the shooting of the Secretary of State for Wales. The only clue to the identity of the assailant is a note sent to the Welsh Senate and signed by one 'Marcus, Volunteer'. Of all the reporters working on the story, only Redfern is able to unpick the clues and discover the attacker. However, in doing so he discovers an enormous subversive left-wing organization operating at the heart of the British establishment and poised to take it over: The Volunteers.

At this point in a typical thriller the way forward is usually clearcut. SMERSH (Communist) represents evil and James Bond (Capitalist) represents good. The need for the hero to destroy the alien conspiracy in favour of the status quo is not something any reader is encouraged to question. But Redfern is not the typical gung-ho establishment agent which a run-of-the-mill thriller requires. He keeps down his job largely because, as an ex-radical, he has inside knowledge of the workings of the political underground. However, the novel shows that this knowledge and the power it gives him to see through official bluffing and deception only takes him so far. Once he discovers the existence of The Volunteers, all his residual political sympathies are activated. The dilemma he is then faced with – should he expose the organization or join it? – occupies the rest of the book.

The choice is not straightforward, partly because of an uneasiness about what The Volunteers actually represent. It seems to be a modern variant of Fabianism, in which socialism is to be achieved by radical individuals permeating the highest ranks of social and political life. In the case of The Volunteers, however, infiltration has to be covert, and therefore the individuals involved must have no traceable political interest. If their commitment is not public, Redfern recognizes, it is 'a commitment to nothing'. The shooting may be a signal for The Volunteers to 'take over', but the question Redfern finds himself asking is 'why these people should change the system when they've become the system'. Yet, in the absence of any other obvious radical successes, the attractiveness of The Volunteers is also powerful.

The Volunteers is a predictive novel. Although set in the mid-1980s, it was first published in 1978, long before the attempts by the IRA to assassinate members of the Cabinet of successive British governments. While one intention of the book is simply to work out some position on the use of violence for political purposes, the specific inclusion of terrorism gives a noticeable air of authenticity to the plot: satellite TV, corporate empire-building, nationalist agitation, economic depression, industrial militancy and its savage repression by the State are additional elements which render the novel an impressive and convincing depiction of Britain in the last decade.

But what is thrilling about the book ultimately is the way it turns the routines of the conventional 'thriller' upside down. Redfern, tied in a knot of conflicting loyalties, is the antithesis of the decisive, dashing, swaggering hero. The novel explodes the pious notion of the media as an honest broker innocently retailing the 'objective facts' of public life without allegiance to any particular political corner, for concealing or revealing the 'fact' of The Volunteers would both be political actions with enormous political consequences. The ingenious plot of the book places its hero in a personal dilemma where he can no longer deny the truth of this, and in so doing should provoke its readers to similar self-questioning.

Macdonald Daly

The Volunteers by Raymond Williams (1978).

Namibia

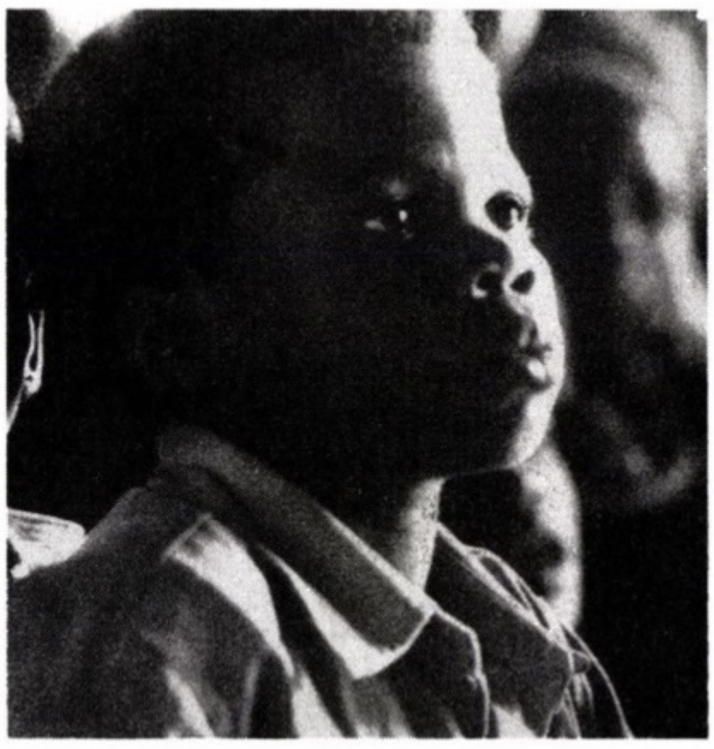


Photo : Mark Edwards

Leader President Sam Nujoma
Economy GNP per capita $930 (US$19,840)
Monetary unit: Rand
Main exports: Uranium concentrate, diamonds, other minerals and metals (copper, lead, tin and zinc), cattle, karakul (animal) pelts. Namibia's fishing grounds are among the best in the world but are almost entirely fished by foreign boats. There is a small tourism industry.
Main imports: Food (50% of food needs), petroleum products and fuel, machinery and transport equipment.
People 1.8 million
Health Infant mortality 97 per 1,000 live births (US 10 per 1,000)
Culture Ovambos make up about half the population; there are other sizeable groups such as the Hereros, and much smaller ones such as the Khoisan (Bushmen) and the Tswana. The white population makes up 6.6% of the population.
Languages English, Afrikaans, German, a range of African languages.

Sources: State of World Population 1991; Population Reference Data Sheet, 1990; Population Reference Bureau; ODI Briefing Paper on Namibia; State of the World's Children 1991.

Previously profiled in April 1983

IN the West, until recently, little was heard of newly-independent Namibia, a country which occupies a vast slice of south-west Africa. There is still a Germanic flavour to Namibia, most notably in the towns where the frequent sound of spoken German is a reminder of an era that technically ended in 1914, when South Africa assumed control.

The country has at last entered a period of relative calm. Decades of controversy regarding its future, with a prolonged and bloody war spearheaded by SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) against South African rule, culminated in a transitional period when UNTAG (United Nations Transitional Assistance Group) forces, distinctive in their white vehicles, were placed here to oversee elections.

SWAPO obtained a majority in the post-independence elections, but not the two-thirds required to write the new constitution alone. It faces major challenges now that the euphoria of independence has subsided. Some 40,000 refugees need to be settled, and the nation is expecting tangible evidence of a change of government, while an expanding population with a youthful base means that demands for jobs, housing, health, education, and other services are ever-growing. That is all apart from a need to boost levels of literacy and health care owing to the relative neglect of social services for much of the population in the past.

It is not going to be easy. Little economic growth is forecast for 1991, after negative growth in the 1980s. The country also needs to expand its already small skill base and attract new investment. At present over 50 per cent of the population are engaged in subsistence agriculture, with over 70 per cent depending in some way on agriculture for their livelihood. Namibia is not land-scarce, but 40 per cent is covered by the Namib desert and Kalahari semi-desert; there has been increasing pressure on land in many rural areas leading to an influx into the towns exacerbating already high unemployment. Namibia has been urbanizing very quickly; town residents doubled between 1970 and 1985.

The outlook is not all gloomy though; the mining, agricultural and fishing sectors are considered to have some growth potential. Unlike many African countries, Namibia came to independence with a working physical, financial and administrative infrastructure. To date the Government has been emphasizing flexibility in its economic policies, talking of a mixed economy as opposed to public ownership and control. Pragmatism best typifies the outlook of Africa's newest 'baby', already 'adopted' by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – Fairy Godmothers, or Ugly Sisters?

Gwenda Brophy

At a glance

***** Excellent
**** Good
*** Fair
** Poor
* Appalling

INCOME DISTRIBUTION
**

Should get better, but slowly.

1983: *

SELF-RELIANCE
***

Range of export minerals helps buffer price swings.

1983: *

POSITION OF WOMEN
**

Government aims to enhance women's role.

1983: **

POLITICS

Pragmatic socialism.

1983

LITERACY
**

Great challenge; illiteracy 60% in some areas.

1983: *

FREEDOM
***

Government appears to be aiming for reconciliation.

1983: *

LIFE EXPECTANCY
***

Improving, 59 years *(US 76 years)*

1983: *

coming *next* month

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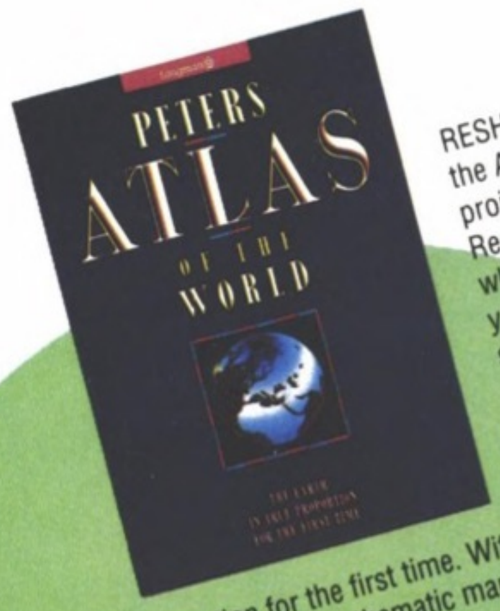

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